

# Ancestry

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Oral Histories  
of World War II

**Yuletide  
in Early America**





3

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*by Maureen A. Taylor*

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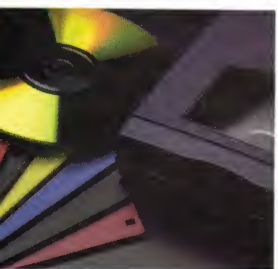
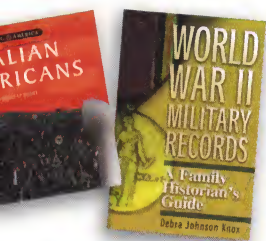
Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin have a diverse and interesting history, as well as diverse and useful record sets for family historians.

*by Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens, CGRS, CGL*





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# Ancestry

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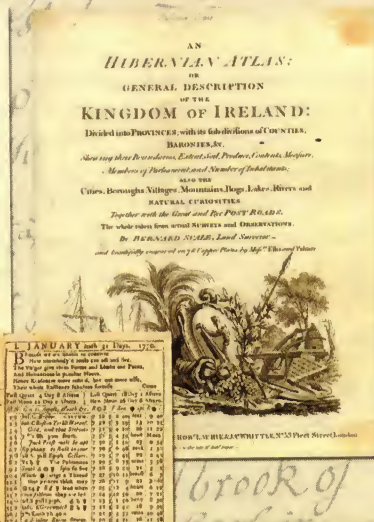
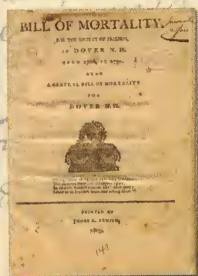


# We've been collecting data for our website since 1847....

For over 150 years, the **NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY** has been acquiring and preserving unique family history records. Now we are making these records — diaries, manuscripts, tax lists, church registers, genealogies, and more — available online at [NewEnglandAncestors.org](http://NewEnglandAncestors.org).

## NEHGS members can access:

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- Massachusetts Vital Records to 1850
- The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1620–1633
- Cemetery Transcriptions from the NEHGS Manuscript Collections
- Death Notices from the *New York Post*, 1801–1890
- *Vital Record of Rhode Island, 1636–1850*, by James N. Arnold
- 1740 Ireland Protestant Housekeepers in Counties Antrim, Derry, Donegal, and Londonderry



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It's funny how the kind words and wisdom of a total stranger can stay with you for decades. Sometimes they resurface, unexpectedly bringing light and warmth out of nowhere.

Trying hard not to repeat the frenzy that tends to mar holidays, I've made up my mind to set aside at least one hour a day to savor the memories of people and seasons that have touched and brightened my life. Since the end of the day usually spins out of control with work and family activities, I'm getting up an hour earlier in the morning. It's still dark and peaceful, and I can think and write without interruption.

In the early hours of a day not long ago, I was thinking of some of our holiday family traditions, where they started, and how they have evolved. Suddenly, I remembered the year when I thought traditions would end and life would never be the same.

I was a senior in high school, taking a bus out of my home in El Paso. It was Christmas Eve, and I was feeling a deep sadness I hadn't known before. The aunt who had raised me—the woman I'd called Mom since I'd learned to speak—had died just three months before. True enough, I still had a loving family and several of us would be together the next day with my brother's family in a small New Mexico town. But I reasoned that the wonderful holiday rituals that Mom had sparked in the past would now be over.

From the window of the bus, I watched and wallowed in self-pity as the streetlights of my hometown gave way to the dark desert night. Apparently sensing my sadness, the elderly gentleman sitting next to me gently began to engage me in a conversation that I at first tried to avoid. Why I decided to tell him my story, I don't fully remember now. But unconsciously, I think I've kept and learned from his response for all these years.

He said he was from India where Christmas was not observed, and we talked about holiday lights and customs in this country and in his. He told me of his extensive travels and how he had come to understand the importance of family traditions in the parts of the world he had visited. He believed that every family tradition is in itself a gift of light that helps to guide one age to the next. This stranger's sug-

gestion that it was now time for me and for all of my generation to pick up the torch and carry on with family traditions somehow took a strong hold in my mind.

My first Christmas away from home turned out to be a happy one. My brother's little ones were a wonderful source of joy for each of us. I was comforted to see old family holiday traditions shining through, and we even added some new traditions that year.

Like most families, ours cherishes its old ways, and we continually add bright new traditions as the years go on. Our ten grandchildren now relish traditions from my Irish, English, French, and German ancestors as well as those of my husband whose people were from Hungary and Poland.

Additionally, for the sake of preserving the many facets of their diverse heritage, we have adopted important traditions from our sons-in-laws' families. And it doesn't stop there. For twenty years, a dear family friend who was a Catholic priest spent Christmases with us. He passed away earlier this year, but we won't soon forget his goodness and the traditions he brought to our table.

Although I never saw the nameless stranger from India again, his kindness and wisdom live on. Though the individuals whose traditions we preserve may no longer be with us, their gifts of light have been left with us. With those gifts, we have enormous power to brighten the world.



*Loretto D. Szucs*

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# Readers' Voices

## What are your family history gift ideas for the holidays?

### Music, Memories, and Old Family Films

For Christmas this year, members of our family will receive a DVD consisting of edited 8mm films taken from the fifties through the eighties. My eldest daughter transferred the 8mm films onto a computer. After extensive editing that included identifying relatives and time periods, we ended up with an hour of wonderful memories.

We had the most fun adding music! What a difference that made. We began with the big band sound of "Sentimental Journey." We accompanied a family work project with the Beatles singing "All You Need Is Love." We sat with tears running down our faces as we watched my father wink at my mother, who was holding the camera, to Harry Connick, Jr., singing, "A Wink and a Smile." My parents watched the preview edition and thought it was terrific. We can hardly wait for Christmas so the rest of the family can see it.

*Janet Newell  
Granite Bay, California*

educating people about how to trace their family history. (Among our offerings are weekly classes, summer day camps for students, and a four-hour seminar called "Packing Your Genealogy Suitcase.")

During summer 2003 we launched our "Christmas in July" event. Clients were able to have us research their family before the holidays and prepare a family history binder for them to present as a Christmas gift. Now that the holidays are fast approaching, they have the option of presenting our "Give the Gift of History" package. They will receive a gift certificate to wrap and put under the tree. After Christmas the recipient can either have us do research for them or take our introductory Family History Basics Class. We prefer the latter, as the old saying goes, "Give a man a fish; you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish; and you have fed him for a lifetime." Either way the recipient has received a gift that "keeps on giving."

*Susan Sloan  
Fayetteville, Georgia*

### The Gift That Keeps on Giving

After taking an early retirement offer in June 2000, I began searching for my "second career." I combined a masters degree in education with my love of genealogy and opened a tutoring service that specializes in

#### Readers' Voices Question

**What are the creative ways you've displayed your family history research?**

Please e-mail your response to Readers' Voices <editoram@ancestry.com>.

#### Image Credit

The sample scrapbook page in Connie Myers' "The Legacy of Heritage Scrapbooks" (page 26, July/August 2003 issue of Ancestry) was taken from Terry Chevako Bava's collection of scrapbook pages. Terry is also quoted in the article.



## Writing Opportunities for Family Historians

**If you're interested in seeing your work in print, Ancestry has two opportunities for you.**

**1** Submit a Bare Bones essay. The final page of each issue of *Ancestry* is dedicated to a Bare Bones essay, which is generally nostalgic, humorous, or sentimental, and relates the unique anecdotal experiences of family historians. Please limit your essay to 600 to 800 words and submit an electronic manuscript with your hard copy.

**2** Submit a case study of your research. If you have a success story about getting past a brick wall or if you've made discoveries you think might benefit other family historians, consider submitting your story to *Ancestry*. We are interested in the unique story of the family member you researched as well as the steps you took to solve the problem, the research methods you used, and the sources you consulted. Illustrations and photographs are a plus. Entries should be between 1,600 and 1,800 words. Please submit an electronic manuscript with your hard copy.

*Ancestry* will pay a modest fee for your accepted manuscript, upon publication. All submissions should be addressed to:

**Ancestry Magazine  
360 West 4800 North  
Provo, UT 84604  
editoram@ancestry.com**





## Next Stop, Smithsonian Museum!



On Saturday, the 22nd of November, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History will open its largest exhibition ever, "America on the Move." The goal of "America on the Move" is to demonstrate the way that transportation has shaped the lives of Americans through the years.

This 26,000-square-foot exhibit features nineteen chronologically organized sections that help visitors travel through time. Starting with 1876, when the railroad came to a town in California, the exhibit finishes with the globalization of 1999 Los Angeles. Included in the exhibit are forty feet of pavement from the original Route 66, a Chicago Transit Authority Car from the 1950s, and a 1903 Winton (the first car that was driven across the United States).

Once the exhibit opens, the Smithsonian will offer a website for "America on the Move" at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove>. In addition to showcasing items from the exhibition, this website will also include behind-the-scenes information about the exhibit's creation, teachers' aids, educational games, and a powerful search engine.

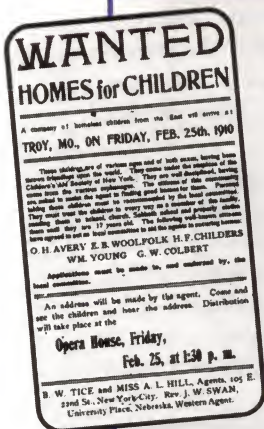


## ORPHAN TRAIN SOCIETY RELOCATES

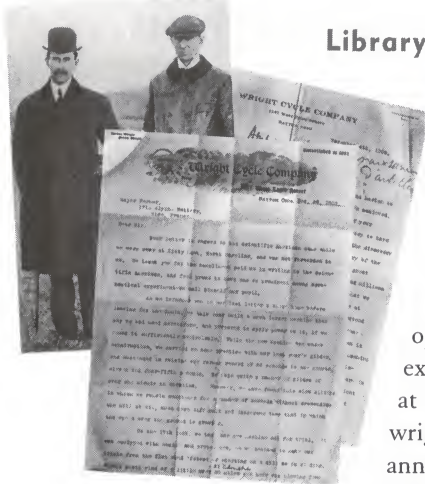
In July 2003, the Orphan Train Heritage Society of America (OTHSA) moved from Springdale, Arkansas, to Concordia, Kansas. Though the OTHSA office is currently located in downtown Concordia, the OTHSA Research Center and Museum will move to a historic 1917 Concordia depot of the Union Pacific Railroad within the next two years.

The impetus for the move was founder Mary Ellen Johnson's 2001 announcement that she planned to retire from her day-to-day OTHSA responsibilities in 2004.

The society focuses on 250,000 children who were sent by train from the east coast to live with families in rural America between 1854 and 1929. Johnson began OTHSA seventeen years ago in hope of preserving the history of this time period and these children's stories. Concordia was actually the arrival place for some of the Orphan Train children, and a number of these Orphan Train riders' descendants still live in the area. Visit [www.orphantrainriders.com](http://www.orphantrainriders.com) for more information.







# Library of Congress Celebrates the Centennial of Flight

On September 25th, "The Dream of Flight" opened at the Library of Congress. This exhibit, in conjunction with an online exhibit at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wrighthtml/wrighthome.html>, commemorates the 100-year anniversary of the first controlled flight that was made by Orville and Wilbur Wright on 17 December 1903.

Included in the exhibit is memorabilia such as a telegram that Orville sent to his father after succeeding at Kitty Hawk, a film of Wilbur's 1909 demonstration flights in Europe, and a piece of fabric from the original 1903 machine. In addition to offering a multitude of Wright family memorabilia, the exhibit highlights others who helped make the dream of flight a reality, namely, Benjamin Franklin, Octave Chanute, Charles Lindbergh, and Amelia Earhart.

Of the 30,000 Wilbur and Orville Wright Papers that the Library of Congress owns, nearly 10,000 of the most significant documents will be available on the website. The exhibit will reside in the center of the "American Treasures" area through 24 April 2004.



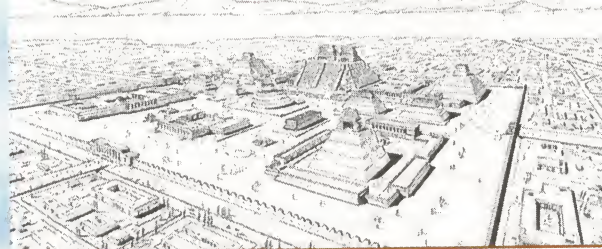
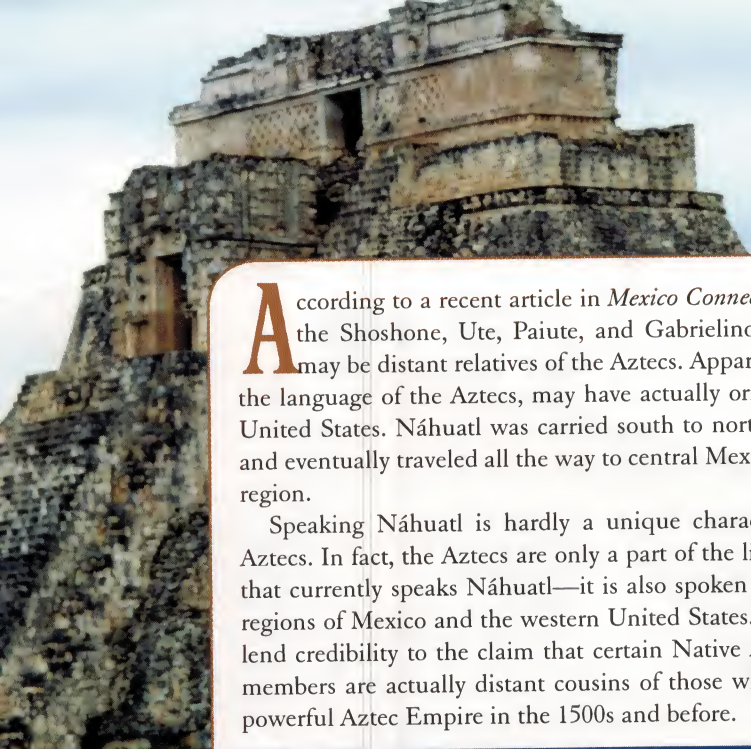
## NGS GENTECH 2004

"Preserving the Past—Exploring the Future" is the theme of the upcoming NGS GENTECH 2004 Conference. On January 22–24, researchers will gather from across the globe to the Millennium Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri, to learn more about the exciting new technological developments in genealogy.

Researchers of all computer skill levels will find a variety of topics to choose from, including electronic sources, Internet, imaging, and electronic publishing. If you'd like to learn how to build a website on which to display your family history, how to use digital photography in your genealogy research, or how to explore federal websites, sign up for a Thursday Tutorial. In addition to these tutorials, which are new this year, NGS is also offering you the opportunity to have your records (especially Bible records) digitized.

While in St. Louis, you may want to plan some extra research time at the History and Genealogy section of the St. Louis Public Library, Special Collections in the St. Louis County Library, and the Missouri Historical Society Library. In addition to visiting St. Louis' great genealogical libraries, you may stroll from the Millennium Hotel to the famous Gateway Arch, tour the Museum of Westward Expansion, and the Old Courthouse (where the Dred Scott decision was made). For more information about this conference, visit [www.eshow2000.com/ngsgentech/](http://www.eshow2000.com/ngsgentech/).

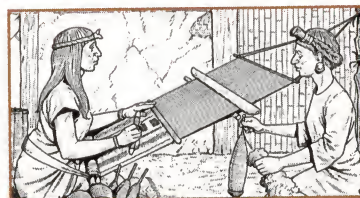




According to a recent article in *Mexico Connect*, members of the Shoshone, Ute, Paiute, and Gabrielino Indian tribes may be distant relatives of the Aztecs. Apparently Náhuatl, the language of the Aztecs, may have actually originated in the United States. Náhuatl was carried south to northwest Mexico, and eventually traveled all the way to central Mexico, the Aztecs' region.

Speaking Náhuatl is hardly a unique characteristic of the Aztecs. In fact, the Aztecs are only a part of the linguistic group that currently speaks Náhuatl—it is also spoken in many other regions of Mexico and the western United States. This fact may lend credibility to the claim that certain Native American tribe members are actually distant cousins of those who lived in the powerful Aztec Empire in the 1500s and before.

## Are you a relative of the Aztecs?



## Photo Corner

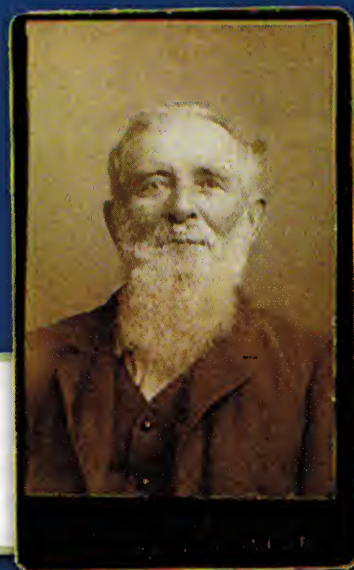


The men in this mid-1920s photo were helping to construct U.S. Highway 6 through Muscatine County, Iowa. The man on the right is my father, Harry Harper.

*submitted by Hope Harper*

This photo is of my maternal great-grandfather, Edward Randolph Yates, known in Fiddletown, California, as Squire Yates. He was a judge on the Amador Criminal Court. One time he adjourned the court just to call someone a liar, then opened it again.

*submitted by Abigail Parrish*



Would you like to see a favorite photo of your ancestors in *Ancestry*? Now you can submit your photos to Photo Corner. Submissions should include your name, contact information, date of photo, who is pictured, and a short description. Please do not submit a photo of living persons without their written consent. Mail a quality duplicate (no photocopies or originals) to *Ancestry Magazine* 360 West 4800 North, Provo, UT 84604, or e-mail a 300 DPI TIFF scan to <editoram@ancestry.com>. Submissions become the property of *Ancestry Magazine*. You will be contacted if your photo is chosen.



## Coming to America: Italian Americans

by Barry Moreno. Ivy Press Limited, 2003. 128 pages. Hardcover. \$14.95 plus s/h. Order at <[www.barronseduc.com](http://www.barronseduc.com)>.

Between 1880 and 1924 more than four million Italian immigrants came to the United States. Each brought with them a love for their homeland, and dreams and aspirations for America. In *Coming to America: Italian Americans*, author Barry Moreno tells the stories of these Italian immigrants using both pictures and personal histories.

The book begins by discussing Old Italy, the mass immigration from the Mezzogiorno, and the difficulties immigrants faced before their arrival in America. Through these snippets of personal histories, readers can learn how Italian immigrants created a "Little Italy" in many large American cities and how they dealt with poverty, language barriers, and prejudice. In addition, this book explores the impact that Italian Americans have had in the United States and how their customs and traditions have changed to create what Moreno terms the "Italian American Way."

## Organizing & Preserving Your Heirloom Documents

by Katherine Scott Sturdevant. Betterway Books, 2002. 238 pages. Softcover. \$21.99 plus s/h. Order at <[www.familytreemagazine.com](http://www.familytreemagazine.com)>.

Most family historians have probably wondered how to best find and preserve their family heirlooms. In *Organizing & Preserving Your Heirloom Documents*, author Katherine Sturdevant answers many of the complicated questions that arise in both finding heirloom documents and then organizing and preserving them.

Her book explains how to locate heirlooms and discusses their importance in preserving family history. Each chapter gives details and guidelines about organizing, transcribing, editing, illustrating, and even publishing documents. In addition to these instructions, Sturdevant gives tips on how to make these processes easier and suggests organizations and professionals to contact for help with various documents.

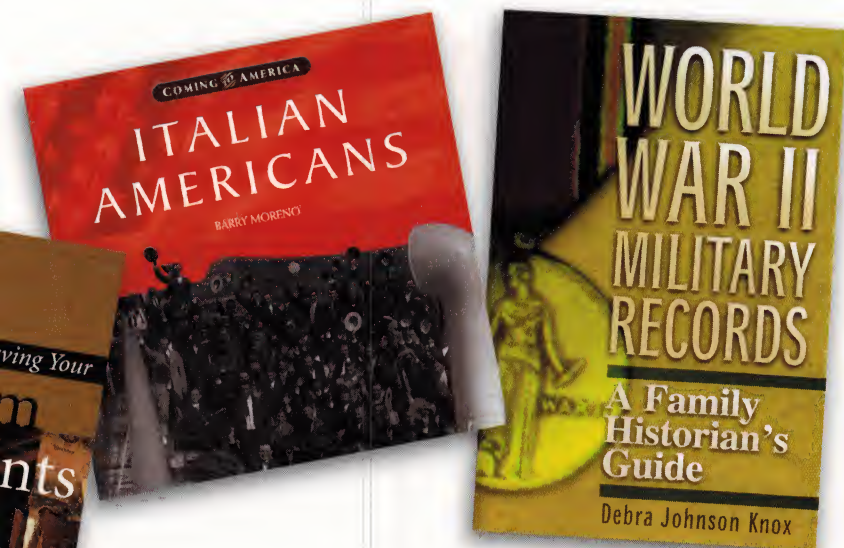
## Research Your Family History Genealogy for the First Time

by Laura Best. Sterling Publishing, 2003. 112 pages. Hardcover. \$19.95 plus s/h. Order at <[www.chapelleltd.com/library/](http://www.chapelleltd.com/library/)>.

A genealogy book for beginners, this hardcover full-color book is designed to inspire even the most hard-hearted cynic to pull out his or her pen and start putting together the family story. The author defines the various forms and charts, repositories, and sources of genealogical information, and tells what information can be found where. Each step is simply and carefully described in manageable, bite-size pieces; the typeface is easy to read and the author's language is clear and straightforward. The format is visually attractive and eye-catching. The book's elegant design is a perfect complement to the photographs of heirlooms, old marriage certificates and letters, and other memorabilia.







### World War II Military Records: A Family Historian's Guide

by Debra Johnson Knox. Mie Publishing, 2003. 360 pages. Softcover. \$23.95 plus s/h. Order at <[www.militaryusa.com](http://www.militaryusa.com)>.

Author Debra Johnson Knox is a licensed private investigator (specializing in military research) who describes the sources for family historians interested in military records. Beginning with individual and organizational military records, she goes on to cover other records, including draft, casualty, and death records. She also includes images of medals and describes what they looked like, when they were given, and under what circumstances. Suggestions are given for locating veterans who may have served with your ancestor, and a detailed appendix contains military reunion associations, pay charts, serial numbers, military museums, forms and worksheets, national cemeteries, state records and addresses, and departments of veterans affairs.

### Genealogical Research on the Web

by Diane K. Kovacs. Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2002. 194 pages. Softcover. \$59.95 plus s/h. Order at <[www.neal-schuman.com](http://www.neal-schuman.com)>.

Described as a "workshop in a book," this unique workbook comes with access to an online workshop. While the class is optional and the book provides ample information, the combination provides a multi-faceted learning experience that increases the user's chances of a positive experience with the Internet.

Starting with the ten best genealogical reference tools on the Internet, the author next discusses networking with living family members and/or fellow genealogical researchers, finding family members, and using e-mail and discussion groups effectively. Correspondence and off-site research tips improve research travels, which help researchers learn to locate international, African American, and Native American ancestors, heraldry, and lineage societies.

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# Yuletide

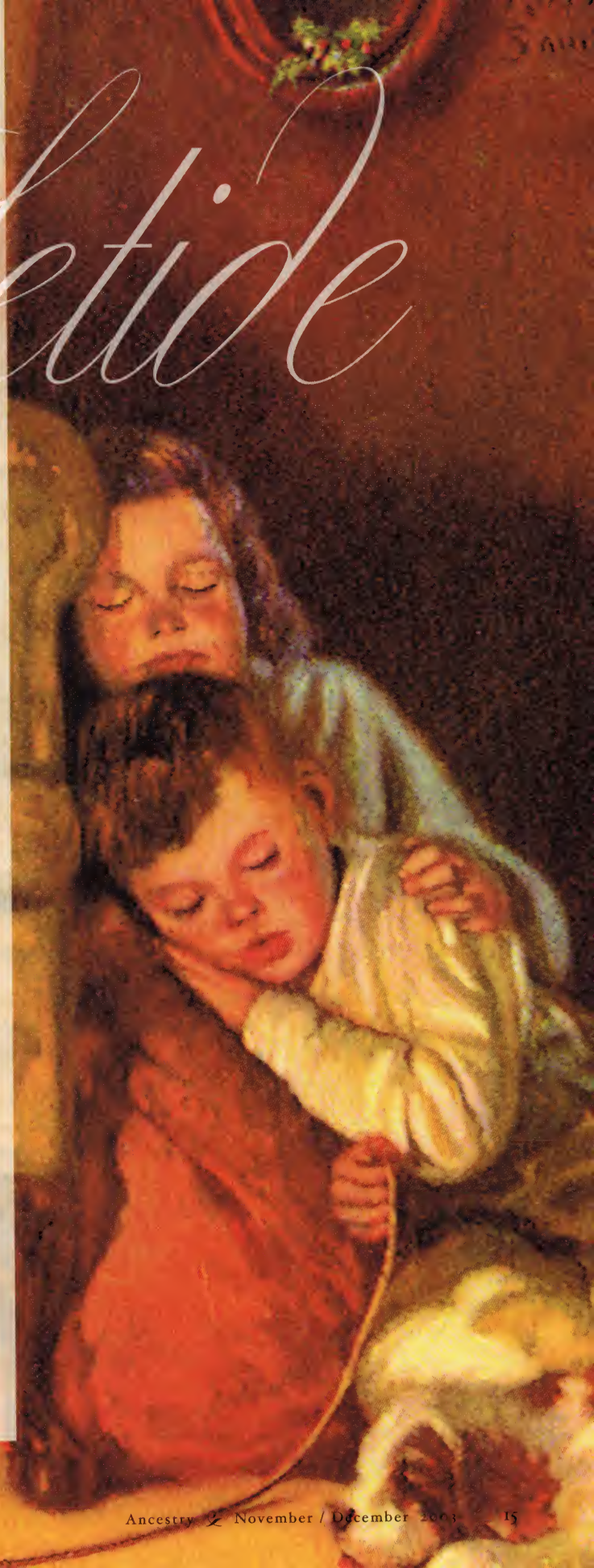
## in Early America

**T**he Twelve Days of Christmas. Kris Kringle. St. Nicolas and Santa Claus. Yule logs, candles, and Christmas trees. Holly, mistletoe, and poinsettias. Parades and carols. Feasts and presents galore! Ahh! What a tingle of excitement these thoughts bring! Not to mention a rush of memories wrapped in family traditions and lore.

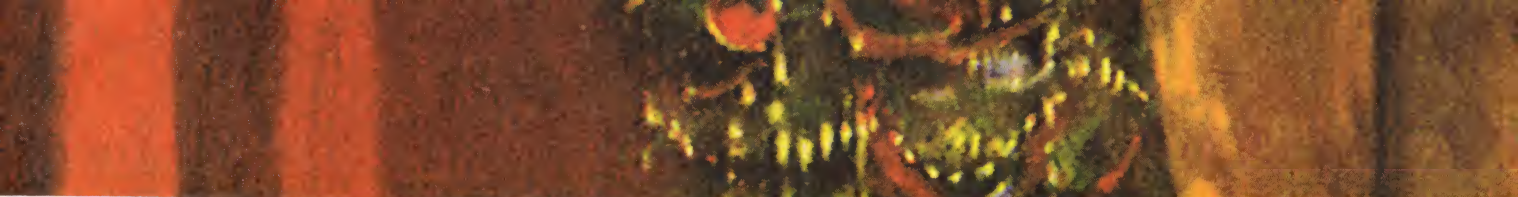
The customs that symbolize Christmas in America are a testament to our wondrous blend of cultures. We celebrate now a spirit that united a nation in the childhood of our grandparents. We see, in our own time, a reshaping of Christmas into a greater season of goodwill that embraces even more cultures. But beyond our memories and our lore, what do we know about the ways this holiday shaped the lives of our distant forebears?



Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FASG







For family historians striving to portray ancestors with historical accuracy, Christmas can be a season of surprises. As mirth and reverence jostled cheek to jowl amid a whirligig of beliefs, where did our own ancestors stand? Was it for them a carnival, a blank slate, or a judgment day that demanded penances and handed out rewards?<sup>1</sup>

## The Twelve Days of Christmas

Like all Biblical begats, Luke's account of the birth of Jesus to the carpenter Joseph and his wife Mary left this vital event undated. Predictably, a host of traditions eventually filled the void, with two dates dominant by the fourth century. In the East, Christians celebrated 6 January, the Feast of the Epiphany. In the West, they adopted an older Pagan holiday—celebrated throughout Europe during the winter solstice—and set their Feast of the Nativity at 25 December.

Bridging that divide, the Old World created The Twelve Days of Christmas, although some cultures clung to festivities on other days. In Britain, where the Old English *Cristes Maesse* (the Mass of Christ) gave the day its modern name, Cromwell's Parliament of 1643 outlawed the celebration entirely—arguing that it was a “Popish Custom.” After the Restoration of 1660 ousted the fundamentalists, the Christmas holiday (but not, holy day) was set at 25 December.

In the New World, explorers and settlers transplanted these conflicting ideologies. The 25th of December 1492 found Christopher Columbus celebrating off the coast of Haiti, where he would build a fortress in that day's honor,

La Navidad. Northward, in Virginia during the winter of 1608/1609, John Smith and his followers held their feast among the Indians—on 6 January.

The Puritans who landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620 denounced the celebration entirely for its pagan roots. Writing of their second Christmas, founding fathers William Bradford and Edward Winslow reported:

“The Govr caled them out to worke ... but

the most of this new-company excused them selves and said it wente against their consciences to work on that day. So the Govr tould them that if they made it [a] mater of conscience, he would spare them till they were better informed. So he led-away the rest and left them; but when they came home at noone from their worke, he found them in the streete at play, openly.... So he ... tould them that was against his conscience, that they should play and others worke.... Since [then] nothing hath been attempted that way.”<sup>2</sup>

Two centuries passed before most New Englanders accepted Christmas as a holiday. In 1898, the octogenarian Rev. Henry Ward Beecher recalled:

“I was not brought up, among the Litchfield hills of Connecticut, to know anything about Christmas or Christmas Eve. I have but one recollection of my youth in connection with that festival.... On a snowy night ... I passed the little box that was called an Episcopal Church. The door was open, the light shone out, and I could see the evergreens that had been put inside, and hear the music of the choir. ... As for ... the columns ... twined with green and ... such services as they observed, I had a feeling of mixed wonder and pity.”<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere, Americans merrily decked their homes and churches with the “pagan” greenery that troubled Rev. Beecher, but the Puritan view of Christmas as just another day can still be seen. Records show courts convening on Christmas Day 1706 in Maryland, 1792 in Kentucky, and 1869 in Kansas; and many millhands were forced to labor on Christmas Day by factory owners who juggled shifts to prevent their going to church.

## Colonial Era

Among those who opposed Yuletide rituals, the rejection lay not just in the holiday's pagan roots but in the manner of celebration.

For centuries, festivities were dominated by the young, the rowdy, and the lusty. In the English colonies, staid souls denounced the custom of wassailing, in which bands of noisy, tipsy, and often costumed males roamed the streets and invaded homes, demanding gifts, money, and liquor in exchange for songs, gags, or the promise of not being harmed!

Ministers such as Cotton Mather decried the wanton carousing, the bawdy gangs, and the tipsy damsels who joined this sport—particularly in maritime communities such as Nantucket, Marblehead, and the Isle of Shoals, where inhabitants were considered “incorrigible.” In retrospect, ministerial concern seems justified. Modern





historians of several New England towns calculate from vital records that half the firstborn children were premature—with illegitimate births peaking nine months after the Christmas season.

Wassailers, of course, had their counterparts elsewhere. Irish Catholics brought *mumming* to America, although their revelry favored musical instruments over ribald verse. And others turned that custom into caroling—street fêtes in which both males and females cross-dressed for their revels to disguise themselves.

French Catholics who brought *charivaris* to Louisiana made merry with everything imaginable that made music or noise. African-Americans, who introduced *jonkonns* to North Carolina—and New Orleans under other labels—favored fantastic costumes, along with demands for gifts from masters.

### Post-Revolution

By 1800, revelry lost some rougher tones in the seaboard states, as celebrations became a courtship ritual for youth and embraced tamer uses of caroling and mistletoe. The Christmas entries that the Maine midwife Martha Ballard wrote in her diary, 1785–1812, were typical. Speaking of herself, she described her darning, her laundry, and her housework. Of the unmarried members of her family, she wrote of dances and other occasions for romantic pairings.<sup>4</sup>


As settlements moved westward, festivities remaining secular for most of the nineteenth-century. Frontier Christmases were rowdy celebrations for males, while genteel ladies kept to their homes. Visiting San Francisco in 1849, John W. Audubon wrote:

“Christmas Day! Happy Christmas! Merry Christmas! Not [for] me ... in this pandemonium of a city. Not a lady to be seen, and the women, poor things, sad and silent, except when drunk or excited. The place full of gamblers, hundreds of them, and men of the lowest types. ... Sunday makes no difference, certainly not Christmas, except for a little more drunkenness, and a little extra effort on the part of the hotel keepers to take in more money.”<sup>5</sup>

The peripatetic Frederic Law Olmsted, in Texas during Christmas 1853, found the scene only a tad more civilized:

“Late on Christmas eve, we were invited to the window by our landlady, to see the pleasant local custom of The Christmas Serenade. A band of pleasant spirits started from the square, blowing tin horns, and beating tin pans, and visited in succession every house in the village, kicking in doors, and pulling down fences, until every male member of the family had appeared, with appropriate instruments, and joined the merry party.”<sup>6</sup>

Historians have dubbed this “Christmas Serenade”—which was often punctuated by the firing of guns—a Welsh tradition; but it could just as easily be English, Irish, or



## Was Christmas for our ancestors a carnival, a blank slate, or a judgment day that demanded penances and handed out rewards?

French. Curiously, all this street revelry grew out of the Christian custom of gift-giving that indulged the poor in house-to-house begging on Christmas Day. In late nineteenth-century America, all would morph into church-based caroling and more-restrained parades.

### Victorian Influences

With Christmas, as elsewhere in society, Victorian America managed, somewhat, to “civilize” the rowdy. Boston ministers of 1817–1819 failed in their efforts to close businesses and institute church services, but increasing wealth and social graces eventually drew menfolk from the street and into the parlor, where feasts became more refined. The South Carolina scene described by Mary Boykin Chesnut in 1861 could have occurred in most settled states:

“The table was very long. [Guests] sat, stiff and lifeless as pins stuck in rows, showing only heads. ... There was everything nice to eat... Romeo is a capital cook—and the pastry looked as good, with his plum puddings and mince



pies. There was everything there that a hundred years or more of unlimited wealth could accumulate as to silver, china, glass, damask—&c&c.”<sup>7</sup>

### The Gift-Giver

Christmas as a children's fête came late to America. It is generally credited to Pennsylvania Germans, among whom the Christmas tree was first noted in the early 1800s. But child-centered gift-giving during the holy season had much older origins.

Borrowing from legends of St. Nicolas, a fourth-century bishop of Asia Minor who gave presents to the poor, Germans adopted St. Nicolas Day in the Middle Ages. However, their gift-giver came not at Christmas but on 6 December. Nor did he pass at night while children dreamed of sugar plums. Instead, he came in daylight, questioning them on their catechism and their behavior, before deciding whether they merited rewards or penances.

From Germany, the custom spread with countless variations. Dutch lore gave St. Nicolas a companion, a servant named Swarte Piet (Black Peter), to whom children gave apples. In France, St. Nicolas became Père Noël, who left treats on Christmas Eve. Across the channel, after Prince Albert married Victoria, England adopted Germany's white-bearded, red-robed gift-giver, calling him Father Christmas.

The Santa Claus whom Clement Clarke Moore and Washington Irving created in 1822 borrowed from all these customs and more. From Switzerland, they lifted the sleigh and reindeer in which a Christ-child figure was paraded. From Northern Europe they adopted another bit of fancy: when fireplaces were cleaned for the winter season, parents



tantalized children with a promise that good behavior would bring St. Nicolas, a gnome, or an elf down the chimney with presents.

Throughout these centuries, however, popular emphasis upon the gift-giver would also conflict with religious emphasis upon the Christ Child.

### The Christ Child

In Spain, as well as America's Spanish settlements, Christmas worship of the Christ Child created child-centered celebrations at both ends of the Old Twelve Days. Children brought their gifts to the crèche during Christmas Mass, for distribution to the needy. (From this rite, a poor Mexican boy, who had no gift but a red flower he found in the snow, gave America its custom of decorating with poinsettias.) In return for those gifts, children reaped a reward on Epiphany Eve. The shoes they set out that night would be filled by King Baltasar, one of the three Magi, as he passed through on his way to the Holy Land.

Protestant Germans, after the Reformation, adapted the Spanish emphasis on the Christ Child (in German, Christkindl). Making him their gift-giver, their “Kris Kringle,” they hastened the adoption of Christ's birth as the focal point of Christmas celebrations.

### The Spirit of Giving

A theme runs throughout all these customs rooted in the gifts of the Magi: those with privilege and power should share with the lowly and the subservient—rich with poor, masters with servants, parents with children. The last two relationships (masters to servants and parents to children) were in fact viewed as one and the same. Those with legal

The charming vignettes that grace our  
Christmas cards reflect an idyll our  
ancestors might not recognize.





rights were responsible for those without, while those who were “incompetents” under the law owed obedience to those who governed them.

Only at Christmas did custom allow underlings to taste privilege—centering that license upon charity and social indulgences. The lower classes could roam from door to door, begging gifts. Slaves might shuck the role of sycophant and address their masters openly. Still others were lent their masters’ finery for balls at which, one night of the year, they could fancy themselves lords and ladies.

In other pockets of America with British and German roots, both slaves and children reveled in another Christmas indulgence that upturned social order. Those who “surprised” masters or parents—even in bed before they stirred on Christmas morn—with shouts of “Christmas Gift! Christmas Gift!” were entitled to presents.

Writers on antebellum society, however, point to another practical basis for many of the indulgences extended by masters. Christmas gifts of liquor, money, and clothes—as well as feasts and week-long holidays—were also control mechanisms used to reward the obedient and to penalize the obstinate.<sup>8</sup>

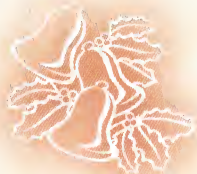
## Reflections

The holiday heritage we celebrate in 2003 reflects many of the toys we give our children. In it, we see a cultural seesaw and a kaleidoscope of customs—a game board, even, on which human lives were moved like chess pieces. But the charming vignettes that grace our Christmas cards reflect an idyll our ancestors might not recognize; and experiences we treasure may have had radically different meanings to our forebears. In Yuletide observances, as in all other aspects of life, the deeper we probe into yesteryear, the more we appreciate L.P. Hartley’s observation that the past is a foreign country where people lived differently. ♪

*Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FASG, is a generational historian who finds that historical context not only adds depth and dimension to ancestral lives but also helps to resolve difficult research problems involving identity and relationship. Her published works include Evidence! and Professional Genealogy: A Manual for Researchers, Writers, Editors, Lecturers, and Librarians.*

## Notes

1. Two excellent books covering the general points made in this paper are Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas* (Knopf, 1996); and Penne L. Restad, *Christmas in America: A History* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1995).
2. William T. Davis, ed., *Bradford’s History of Plymouth Plantation, 1606–1646* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 126–27.
3. Henry Ward Beecher, *Autobiographical Reminiscences* (Frederick A. Stokes, 1898), 86–87.
4. Robert and Cynthia McCausland, eds., *The Diary of Martha Ballard, 1785–1812* (Picton Press, 1992).
5. John W. Audubon, *Audubon’s Western Journal, 1849–1850*, Frank Hodder, ed. (Arthur H. Clark, 1906), 193.
6. Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom* (reprint; Knopf, 1953), 292.
7. C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War* (Yale Univ. Press, 1981), 270.
8. Slave roles and rituals during the Christmas season, ignored in most literature, is addressed at length in Nissenbaum’s *Battle for Christmas* and in William D. Piersen, “African American Festive Style and the Creation of American Culture,” in William Pencak et al., eds., *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (Pennsylvania State Univ., 2002).





# Veterans'

**T**hey were our teachers, police officers, neighbors, fathers, mothers, and grandparents. In World War II, they assumed different roles—those of soldiers, sailors, WACS, and nurses.

I grew up listening to my father's war experiences from his time in the South Pacific and learned to appreciate the efforts World War II veterans gave to this country. Today, we take our freedom for granted, but in the 1940s, men and women had a common cause: to ensure our liberties. They were bound to duty and were willing to make necessary sacrifices.

From my father's tales, I gained an insight in World War II and the lives that were interrupted in order to serve our country. Years later as a commercial photographer, I decided to honor these veterans by embarking on a journey of photographing World War II veterans and collecting their oral histories. By combining photographs with oral history, the resulting work would celebrate their lives in a unique, compelling presentation. The photographs would create the visual appeal while the oral history would add the historical

and emotional interest.

On the front porches and in the living rooms of World War II veterans, I listened to stories of tank battles, bombing missions, and hand-to-hand combat. I was inspired by stories of pilots who managed to fly through tremendous amounts of enemy anti-aircraft flak and returned safely to base, sometimes with seriously damaged planes. I learned about WACS, WAVES, and veterans who served stateside. I listened to accounts from those veterans who served in far-off places that I never knew existed. I also heard tales about ordinary GI life when discussions about how food, showers (or lack thereof), jokes, camaraderie, and even an unsuspecting stray cat could relieve the frightening tensions of war. I heard all their stories.

But the first stories I heard were those of my father, Don Dusenbery, a machinist on the railroad in Chicago. Like most Americans, he didn't know anything about a place called Pearl Harbor until that fateful day in December 1941.

*I was working in Chicago on the railroad when the war*





# Voices

BY ERIC DUSENBERRY

*broke out. We had been hearing about Hitler in Europe but we were so busy, we really didn't have time to pay much attention to everything that was going on over there. I didn't hear anything about the Japanese but of course, all that changed on December 7, 1941 with Pearl Harbor.*

*My buddies and I were going to volunteer for the Navy but before we got around to it, I got my draft notice for the Army. We were shipped out by train from Chicago and we didn't know where we were going but it seemed that all of us were mechanically inclined so we thought we were going for training as machinists or something similar. We ended up in Camp Hood, Texas.*

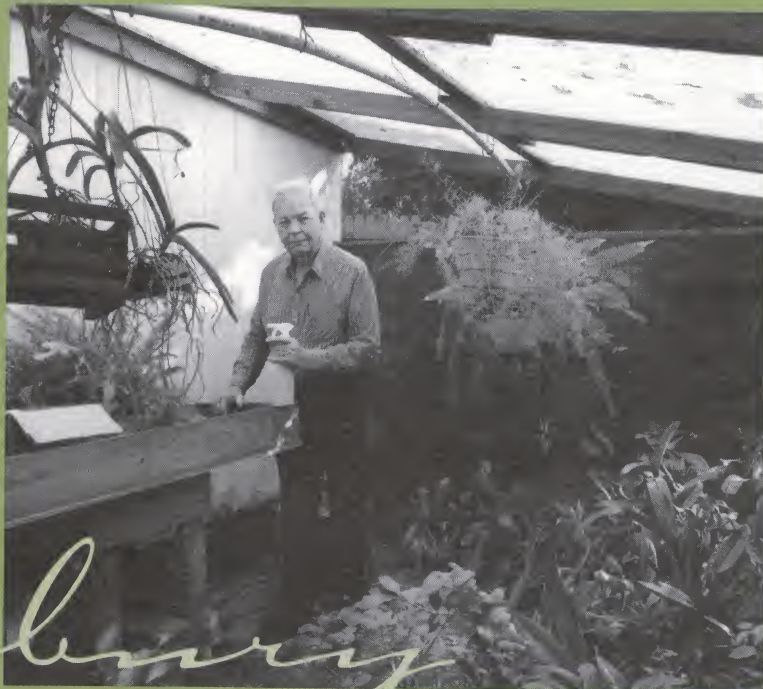
*I was assigned to Ordnance. We were responsible to calibrate, repair, and maintain the sights and aiming mechanisms on artillery and small arms weapons. I eventually ended up in New Guinea where we stayed for six months and then on to the Philippines. When we landed in the Philippines, the Japanese had these huge railroad guns in the mountains—miles away. We would see the flash in the distance, then hear the shell whistling overhead as it got closer and then the explosion. This*

*went on all the first night. Fortunately, no one was killed. I was never able to find out exactly what happened to those Japanese guns.*

*We set up camp not far from the beach. We saw an increase in activity with aircraft and vehicles, and rumors were spreading that the Japanese were close. Just beyond the perimeter of camp was a dense jungle that we used as an area to test fire repaired rifles and weapons that we had worked on. One day, the guys were test firing into the jungle when there was a big commotion—their test firing had actually killed two Japanese soldiers who were on some kind of scouting patrol. Talk about being in the wrong place at the wrong time.*

*My father never glorified World War II or his war stories—he just had a particular job to do and he did it. Growing up in the Great Depression, he'd seen his share of unemployment lines and the poor farmers in rural Illinois when he went home to visit his folks. While still a young man, my father's family life, friendships, the railroad, his normal life, abruptly stopped when he went into the Army.*





Years later, he had a chest full of war souvenirs—Japanese artifacts including a Samurai sword, GI articles, ribbons and patches, a rifle—and I was in awe of the stuff.

## RECALLING THE STORIES

The initial reaction of World War II veterans when I first approached them about participating in the photographic oral history ranged from humility, reluctance, and shyness to enthusiasm and an eagerness to tell their stories. I often needed to remind them that what they had to say was important—that they had much to offer. Once the photography session and interview process was underway, they warmed up to the idea and felt flattered to be involved. Even the most

camera-shy veterans allowed themselves to be photographed knowing how important their participation was.

Meeting and reminiscing with these veterans, I began to realize myself the importance of the project. History is replete with the larger-than-life figures whose lives are documented through Hollywood. But I was tapping into a wealth of history and heroism that was, until now, hidden in the memories of neighbors and friends—these everyday heroes would otherwise pass into obscurity as their numbers diminished.

Many veterans like to tell their stories. They will relate their favorite anecdotes to anyone who will listen, often glorifying others in the process. They are modest and humble, and recall their stories with a sense of duty. Veterans like Evelyn “Mickey” Gilberg, an Army nurse, told details that she had not recalled for years.

## TIPS FOR ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

1. Assure the interviewee that what he or she has to say is important. Once the interview session is underway, a trusting relationship will develop between you and the interviewee.
2. Prepare a set of questions and topics to cover with the subject. Plan to cover some general areas with some basic, easy, introductory questions.
3. Ask as many open-ended questions as possible. The best interview sessions are based on having a warm, friendly conversation and developing rapport, respect, trust, and a genuine interest in the person.

*I finished nursing school in 1940. Not knowing what I wanted to do with my professional life, I decided one year in the Army would help. I would get to travel, meet guys, and hopefully gain focus in my future profession.*

*In my third year in the Army, a hospital unit was formed to be named the 38th Station Hospital. We proceeded to the Port of Embarkation to board the USS Mariposa to cross the Atlantic. I was disgustingly seasick during the entire voyage. We arrived in Birmingham, England, nine days later and that night, the nurses were ordered to spread our blankets on the ground and get some sleep. It was a very bumpy resting place and the next morning, we discovered it was a cabbage patch.*

*On D-day, the 6th of June 1944, the Allies invaded Normandy on the northeast coast of France and all hell broke loose.*





*I believed the 38th Station Hospital was being downsized as many of us were transferred to other units. After bouncing all over England we eventually boarded a ship at Southampton to cross the English Channel.*

*We met a couple of officers who had bottles of “cheer” which we helped them consume. The next morning we arrived at Normandy a bit hung-over. Weighted down with helmet, gas mask, musette bag, and blanket roll, we were ordered to climb over the side of the ship and descend a rope ladder to a landing craft below. Well, I got my body and equipment over the side of the ship but did not know how to climb down the rope ladder. I looked down and thought to myself...I’ll never make it. So someone gave me a push and I fell all the way down into the arms of some GIs in the landing craft. They transported us to about ten yards from dry land and we waded the rest of the way to shore.*

*A chief nurse told us to spread out blankets on the ground and get some sleep—on the muddy beach!? No way! The only dry area on the beach was the nurse’s latrine tent. Since it was not old enough to have that special aroma, we spread our blankets on the latrine boxes and tried to get some sleep. We were frequently interrupted by middle-of-the-night visitors but we would give the girls a hand and lift the latrine lids for them with our feet.*

*From August to November, we were shuffled through temporary duty at various units. The Battle of the Bulge started on*

*December 16, 1944. This was the real thing—air raids, cannons, bullets, bloody wounds, and death. Over 23,000 American soldiers were captured, 81,000 were wounded, and 18,000 killed. We spent New Year’s Day, not celebrating with bells and whistles, but ducking under tables and cots to protect ourselves from flying bullets. Our shot-up quarters were beside a road where Allied tanks were moving up to Bastogne. The enemy was strafing these tanks and some of the bullets penetrated our quarters. We eventually persevered and our boys advanced.*

**I WAS TAPPING INTO  
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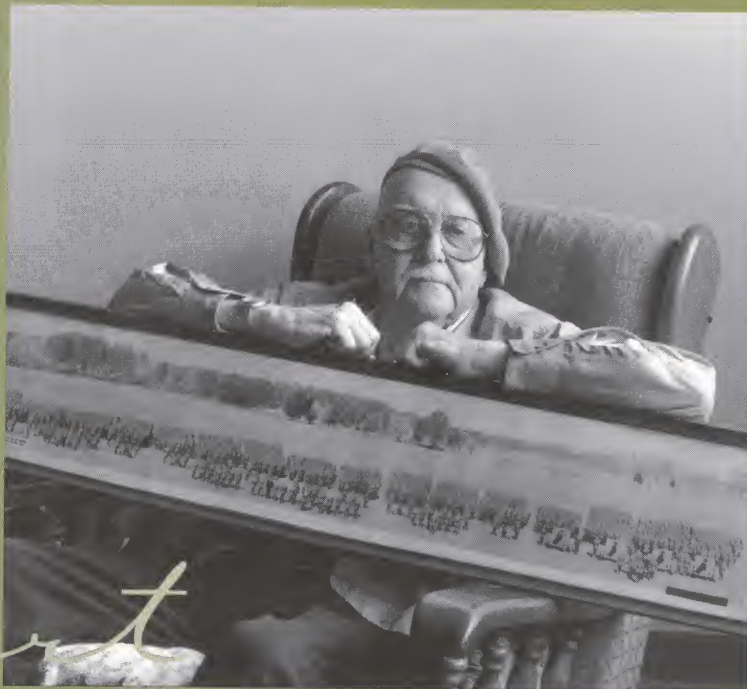
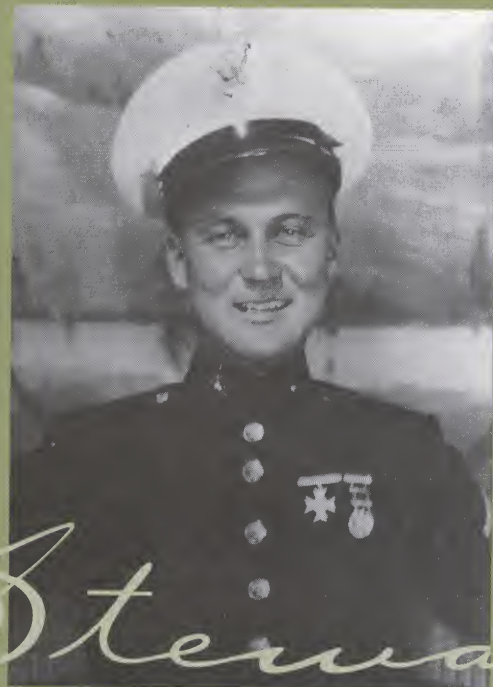
*For many years, I did not think about or talk about my wartime experiences. I was too busy with my family and nursing career. But today, I am a VBOB (Veteran of the Battle of the Bulge). I am proud to try to keep alive the experiences of the Battle of the Bulge and World War II. My one-year voluntary Army duty lasted almost five years on two continents and in six countries.*

### **THE SACRIFICE**

World War II has its famous battles and campaigns, like the Battle of the Bulge, and they are deserving of honor and notoriety. But in talking with the veterans, I became aware that there were countless other battles fought at different locations and endless other commitments by veterans throughout the world.

Veterans are a living testimony to our national heritage, but the war into which America was thrust on 7 December





1941 is fast becoming a faint memory. Apart from a fleeting thought on Memorial Day or an occasional movie seen by the general public, many World War II veterans fear that the war is merely another concept or lesson to be learned from a textbook—battles in forgotten towns, lost generals' names to be memorized.

Robert D. Stewart, 1st Division, U.S.M.C., related to me the story of Guadalcanal—a five-month ordeal that for him is far more than a forgotten battle in a faraway land.

*I was selling cars for Holler Chevrolet when the war started. Holler was the only dealer in Orlando, Florida—things have changed a bit since then. As a Staff Sergeant, I was wire chief of the 1st Battalion, 11th Regiment. I was in charge of telephone communication in the Battalion. The 11th Regiment was artillery and my job was to see that a field telephone switchboard maintained communications between the forward observers and the fire direction center and the artillery cannons. An enemy target coordinate would be relayed to this artillery and pinpointed until we could tell them, "Fire for effect!"*

*On Guadalcanal, we were under fire for five months—the longest of any U.S. Forces in history. A Japanese flat top had been hit by several torpedoes and was sinking fast off Guadalcanal. The 21 Zero fighters on the flat top were ordered to attack Henderson Field and do as much damage as they could before going down.*

*They came in strafing and dropping small bombs. Our 1st Division Air Wing of eight Wildcats was ordered up to fight them. The dogfighting started in the morning and lasted until*

*the afternoon when all the Zeroes had been shot down—nineteen Zeroes by our Air Wing and two by our anti-aircraft. This was the greatest air show I ever saw. We lost one fighter plane. This happened towards the last days of our five months on Guadalcanal.*

*There really wasn't any time to relax on Guadalcanal, but a few of us were singers, and when there was a lull in the fighting, we would sing barbershop songs. As you might expect, we could not communicate with our families back home. It was a long five months.*

## REMEMBER

Many Americans hope the efforts and sacrifices put forth by veterans will be remembered. I asked a veteran if he was bitter about the war. "It's been over fifty years; no, I'm not bitter. It was a long time ago. But I can understand those veterans who are. There was too much suffering, devastation, and cruelty. War is terrible and it's certainly not glorious. I just want people to remember," he emphasized.

William C. Tuck, A Co. 91st Chemical Mortar Battalion, told me a little about his career plans before the war and how they changed due to the impact of war.

*We had heavy mortars to give close support to infantry. Other shells were used to provide smoke screens and still others exploded white phosphorus.*

*One insignificant little memory was of a chicken found by one of our men in the shell-torn town of Echternach, the only living creature left there. It was adopted as Annabelle and went with us through Luxembourg and Germany and up to the Aus-*





trian border, carried in a jeep in a wicker basket. It managed to make it back to the United States after the war, incognito, and then to a new home in Pennsylvania.

Two years of college as a pre-med student preceded enlistment in the Army. The experiences of the war years led me to decide on the ministry. While the camaraderie and friendships were a positive experience, others were not. Time for relaxing on quiet nights led to card games and making hot chocolate from D Ration bars. But the wounded bodies, death, and destruction and evidences of inhumanity gave me a different idea as to what I wanted to do. In addition, some German language training brought me in occasional conversation with German civilians, whose lives and goals were not so different from ours.

I learned many things from completing the Veterans Voices project. I found that the veterans' favorite stories are those that are lighthearted. The pleasant experiences, if they can be so called, are the recollections about people. However, I also realized that most disturbing stories to tell, and to hear, were the accounts of the horrors of World War II—things men and women could not have been prepared to witness.

There were no insignificant stories from the Veteran Voices project—all are important; all are worth hearing. Whether photographed at their hobbies, in their homes or residences, or proudly holding their medals and ribbons, the goal of each photograph and oral history was to communicate the veterans' wisdom, experience, spirit, and immeasurable service rendered to America. More than that, it is hoped the project will celebrate the lives of today's senior citizens who, for a few crucial years in the mid-twen-

tieth century, gave up their youth to attend to matters of the world. ♪

Eric Dusenbery is the owner of Dimensions Photography in Orlando, Florida. His work has appeared in numerous publications, and he is the recipient of several national awards for commercial/editorial photography. His interest in family history was piqued when his great-grandfather's Civil War swords, and later his father's World War II collection, were handed down to his household.


## PHOTOGRAPHING YOUR SUBJECT

1. Use black and white film. Black and white photography renders our world to monochromatic images, and we are forced to study and examine a print when color is taken away.
2. Create an environmental portrait. Put subjects at ease in familiar surroundings where they are relaxed and confident.
3. Use natural lighting if possible. Natural light creates a relaxed atmosphere and produces a soft pleasing appearance. If necessary, use a fast lens and a fast film and use a tripod for longer exposures, making sure the subject holds still for the increased exposure.
4. Process and print your film at a professional lab that specializes in black and white film.











by Maureen A. Taylor

# Clues in Military Photos



There is something about a photograph of a man or woman in uniform that commands attention. These images tell a compelling story of patriotism and bravery—and if you know how to read the clues in the picture, they may tell even more.



All photographic detective work takes an observant eye, a magnifying glass, and, like many genealogical pursuits, a little patience. This is particularly true when examining a photograph of someone in uniform. Basic photo identification techniques involve determining the style of photograph, looking at the costume clues, determining a photographer's place of business, and watching for clues in the smallest details. Deciphering those details usually involves additional





## A Revolutionary Project

Do you have a photograph of your Revolutionary War ancestor? Since photography dates back to 1839, if your patriot lived beyond that date it might be possible to find a portrait of him or her.

Maureen A. Taylor and David Lambert have embarked on a project to locate images of the Revolutionary War pensioners that appeared in the 1840 census. If you would like to learn more about the project or share your photos, please contact them at [mtaylor@taylorandstrong.com](mailto:mtaylor@taylorandstrong.com).

research as well, such as working with experts and tracking down supplementary evidence. It sounds like a lot of work, but it's fun and it will help bring your military ancestor's story to life.

There are a number of ways you can determine the story behind a military photo. Follow these tips and see what you can learn from the photographic evidence of military service.

### Acquire the Photos

Search your family photograph collection for pictures of people in uniform and ask your relatives to do the same. Most men either volunteered or were drafted to participate in the significant wars in American history, including the

American Revolution (1776–1783), War of 1812 (1812–1815), Mexican War (1846), Civil War (1861–1865), Spanish-American War (1898), World War I (1917–1918) and World War II (1941–1945).

If your military ancestors joined a veterans group like the Grand Army of the Republic after the Civil War or the Veterans of Foreign Wars, you may find clues of service through their photos of later years. For instance, you might find a photo of a group of men and women standing in front of Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington. It could be a reunion picture for a Grand Army of the Republic since many Civil War veterans groups visited there.

### Learn the History

Establish a time frame for an unidentified photograph. You may need to research the background history of the armed forces and the various uniform changes. You'll want to visit your public library and maybe even contact one of the regional chapters of the Company of Military Historians at [www.military-historians.org/](http://www.military-historians.org/). This educational, literary, and scientific organization consists of researchers, historians, and collectors that study all aspects of military history in the United States and the Western Hemisphere. It also publishes a quarterly journal called the *Military Collector & Historian* that may prove useful to your research.

Determining the type of photo you have will help you determine the approximate date it was taken. Photography began in 1839 so that's where your search begins. If you own a shiny image with a mirror-like surface, it's probably a daguerreotype (1839 to c.1860). Several other types of photographs in the nineteenth century include ambrotypes (1854 to c.1870, photograph on glass), tintypes (1854 to c.1900, photographs on metal plates), and any number of different styles of paper prints starting in 1839. Each paper print has a different quality and you'll need to consult a book like





James Reilly's *Care and Identification of Nineteenth-Century Photographs* (Kodak, 1986) to be able to tell them apart.

Also, if you're lucky enough to have a photo with a photographer's name on it, consult city directories or listings of photographers to establish when he or she was in business. Search online at the George Eastman House telnet database at <[www.eastman.org/4\\_educ/gehdata.html](http://www.eastman.org/4_educ/gehdata.html)>. This information will lead you to an approximate time and place the photo was taken.

Compare your family photos to images in the books in the resource section and then add up all the clues you have evaluated thus far—family information, type of image, photographer dates—and make sure they agree.

## Gather Clues from Clothing

Clothing clues in a portrait offer particular details that will yield information about your military ancestor. The ability to decipher the subtle changes in uniform style over the years is an acquired skill, but there are some simple things you can do.

First, begin the process of deciphering the costume clues by breaking down the uniform into pieces based on unique characteristics. For instance, look closely for any identifying pendants or insignia. During the Civil War, many Union volunteers wore belt buckles with a state abbreviation signifying their state of enlistment. Confederate soldiers, on the other hand, often wore buckles with CSA for Confederate States of America.



Headgear came in different shapes depending on when the uniform was worn. In the late nineteenth century, spiked helmets became popular in the United States and copied the German version as shown above. Right: The style of the uniform can identify whether the photograph was taken in the United States or in another country.



According to David Lambert, of the New England Historic Genealogical Society and a Civil War reenactor, it can be difficult to tell the difference between uniforms used in the Civil War and those worn post-war because of re-use. The same is true for the post-war period after World War I.

Below are some other costume details to look for:

**Headgear.** During the Civil War, long-crowned kepi's or hats dominated the uniform, but by the mid-1880s military costume regulations changed the shape of the hat to small and tilted. Plumed spiked helmets were part of dress occasions from 1872 to 1904. During this period, German military methods and dress were admired, so these spiked





helmets became part of American military dress. Two collectors of these helmets, Mark Kasal and Don Moore, wrote *A Guide Book to U.S. Army Dress Helmets, 1872–1904* (North Cape Publications, 2000) that is invaluable if you have a portrait of a man wearing a plumed spiked helmet. In World War I soldiers were issued an “overseas cap” once they arrived.

**Decoration.** Cloth chevrons on the sleeves and shoulders of a uniform and insignia on the collar or headgear signified rank. Starting in 1863, badges or insignia pins worn on the headgear identified the corps the soldier served with. In the Navy, hashmarks or cloth stripes on the sleeves stand for sets of years of service. A portrait of someone in full dress uniform would include medals, braids, ribbons, and even sashes, depending on the time period.

Keep in mind that some clues to your ancestor’s military service may be a little hard to see without a magnifying glass. He might be wearing evidence of his service on his jacket lapel in the form of a small pin.

**Weapons and equipment.** If the soldier posed with his full gear, look carefully at the type of sword or firearm he carried and don’t forget his everyday equipment, including a canteen. Each one is an important detail. A man carrying a carbine is probably part of the cavalry, and a man with a pistol could be an officer.

## Finding New Pictures

Your photograph collection might be lacking images of the men and women who served in your family, but that doesn’t mean you can’t locate images of them. There are many ways to locate family photographs that are “missing” from your collection.

David Lambert suggests contacting reenactment groups for an ancestor’s regiment. Many of these groups collect material of the events they reenact. Or a simple search using an Internet search engine like Google can connect you with others interested in the history of a group or even living veterans of twentieth-century conflicts. Another option is to track down descendants of people who served in the same regiment as your family member especially for World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

Pictures of military service include portraits of individuals in uniform, regimental group portraits, war scenes, and photo albums of wartime activities. These photos may be found in a library or historical society. For instance, the largest collection of military images that date from the Mexican-American War to the present are held at the United States Army Military History Institute in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. You can search the Institute’s digital collection online at <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usamhi/photoDB.html> and order copies of any relevant images.



By the twentieth century, standard forms of dress existed for different branches of the military.



The index to James C. Neagles, *U.S. Military Records: A Guide to Federal and State Sources* (Ancestry, 1994) contains more than a dozen listings for archives that contain photographs, either at the state or national level. For instance, the records of the Bureau of Naval Aeronautics (RG 72) at the National Archives include pictures of navy planes, and the American Battle Monuments Commission in Washington, D.C., has photographs of cemetery markers for the soldiers buried overseas.

## Finding Service Records

An integral part of researching the military service of your ancestors is looking for service records on the local, state, and national level. Even if a photograph isn't included, a written description of a soldier provides details such as the color of his hair and eyes. You can use the photographic evidence you've already accumulated to locate more material or use documents to hunt for pictures.

The combination of military service records, historical records, and photographs helps to bring your military ancestor's story to life. Now the next step is to use what you've accumulated to tell the story of your family's military service in a format you can share with your family. You will undoubtedly be able to capture the attention of even the most disinterested family member with what you've discovered.

*Maureen A. Taylor is the author of several genealogical books, including Uncovering Your Ancestry Through Family Photographs (Betterway, 2000) and a guide to family history for kids, Through the Eyes of Your Ancestors (Houghton Mifflin, 1999).*

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## More Photo Resources

Haythornthwaite, Philip. *Uniforms of the Civil War* (Sterling, 1990).

Schick, I.T. *Battledress: Uniforms of the World's Great Armies, 1700 to the Present* (Artus, 1993).

Schick, I.T., ed. *Uniforms of the World's Great Armies 1700 to the Present* (reprint Gallery Books, 1978).

Windrow, Martin and Gerry Embleton. *Military Dress of North America, 1665–1970* (Charles Scribners, 1973).











# creative

# Gift

# idea

## for the holidays

by Maureen A. Taylor

**A**re you looking for unique gift ideas for the holidays? Look no further than your family tree. With a little creativity and planning you can create gifts for all your relatives using your genealogical research.

### **Family Photographs**

Family history is not just about our ancestors, it is also about the events that happen in our everyday lives today. There are an unlimited number of things you can do with family photographs that can be pulled together quickly, easily, and inexpensively.

For instance, purchase a simple frame with multiple openings and create a photo tree using a frame that has spaces for wallet-size photos. Use the frame to portray your family history any way you like.

Many families have multiple generation portraits, but if you don't



# Gifts for Genealogists

If you have a genealogist in your family and you don't know what to give him or her for the holidays, consider the ideas listed here:

- A membership to the Association of Professional Genealogists
- Genealogy software program
- Tuition for a genealogy class in the area or online
- Subscription to *Ancestry Magazine*
- Label maker for research files
- Airfare for a research trip
- Registration to a conference offered by the National Genealogical Society or the Federation of Genealogical Societies
- Gift certificate for a genealogy reference book
- Annual subscription to an online database such as *Ancestry.com* or *Genealogy.com*
- PDA with *Pocket Genealogist* software

have one you can make one using a frame and copies of your photographs. Create a photographic time line of all your direct female or male descendants or use the frame to show several images of the same person over time, such as one of your kids or a grandparent.

When framing pictures, remember to use acid and lignin free paper and cardstock to prevent damage and display in an area away from direct sunlight.

If you've got your family photographs identified, organize them into a photo album or scrapbook with captions or journaling. Focus on one topic to make it manageable. A photo album of wedding photographs can also include handwritten notes from guests who were there. Use a scrapbook to re-tell a child's life with comments from parents and grandparents about special moments from birth through graduation. If you don't have time for a whole album, put together a single page and frame it. Select materials that are acid and lignin free, inks that are waterproof, odorless and permanent, and plastics like polypropylene or mylar to ensure that your gift will last more than a few years.

Photographs can be transferred to almost any surface, including paper, ceramics, and cloth. And don't worry if

you can't do it yourself; try one of the online photo sharing sites like Ofoto.com that offer gift items with photos.

## Jewelry

Photographic jewelry has been popular since the 1840s, but Queen Victoria popularized it when she wore pieces adorned with Prince Albert's image after his death in 1861. Photographs appeared in everything from buttons to locket; you can choose from several varieties even today.

Locketts let you include a photograph or two of special family or friends, but one organization, Renaissance LLC, now offers the option of bracelets with multiple images, pendants, or pins. For my parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary, I selected five photographs from their wedding album, reduced them to the appropriate size at a copy shop, and created a memento of their original wedding day in a bracelet. You can purchase creations such as these from Renaissance. Contact (860) 283-9237 for a store in your area.



## Oral Histories

According to Joe Benson of Gifts of the Past <[www.giftsofthepast.com](http://www.giftsofthepast.com)>, the trend toward personalization includes gifts that reflect family history. There is no better time than the present to record the history of an older member of the family. Now you won't have to remember what your relative's voice was like and recall their stories, you can record them and pass them on to other family members.

Most multimedia studios in your area can transfer home movies to either VHS or DVD. And with a little creativity, you can take recording memories a step further and put picture, music, and voice together. Contact a professional studio in your area for assistance or use one of the many software packages on the market, such as *iMovie* for Macintosh, to create your multimedia presentation of the family.

## Handcrafted Items

Many of our female ancestors were adept at sewing quilts and crocheting doilies. Consult *The Art of Knitting* (1892, a facsimile reproduction of the original edition from the Butterick Publishing Co., reprinted Piper Publishing, 2003) for knitting patterns your grandmother would have used.

You could also create scrapbooks or even paint representations of family members. If you would like to re-create a historical item to give as a gift you can find reprints of nineteenth-century manuals that help you create items like your ancestors did (such as *The Art of Knitting*). Mary Ann Wood of Massachusetts creates beautiful pins and earrings for her



customers from broken and chipped dinnerware that would otherwise have been thrown in the trash.

A book such as the *Art of Family: Genealogical Artifacts in New England* will get your creative juices started, or you can visit museums and libraries to find examples. Contemporary magazines like *Creating Keepsakes*, *Legacy*, and *Memory Makers* also have feature articles that illustrate how to assemble scrapbooks and various other heritage art. Regardless of your skill level, you can find projects that match your ability and interests.

## Recipe Books and Food Stuffs

If someone in your family has a collection of favorite dishes they've developed and haven't written the recipes down in a family recipe book, consider the project for a family gift. The book could consist of the recipes of one family member or favorites from anyone in the family who wants to contribute.

Another option is to put together a gift basket of treats with recipes. Don't forget to include the background history of the food item in your family and a story about the person who created it. A gift basket could contain the ingredients for a favorite family recipe, the recipe itself, and pictures and stories about the relative who made the recipe a family favorite.

## Family History

Have you thought of publishing your family history to be ready for the holidays? It may seem relatively easy to input information and images into your favorite genealogical software package and "publish" your family history, but publishing your family history is a huge project you'll want to do right. It can't be done in a few weeks. Don't give yourself additional stress this holiday season unless your manuscript is ready to publish.

For gift ideas this holiday season, introduce your relatives to their family history by presenting them with census pages, passenger lists or naturalization pages with their ancestors name on them. This might make them more enthusiastic toward your hobby and may be the perfect opportunity to ask them if they'd be willing to help you with your research load.



## Locate a Family Heirloom

Visit antique shops and browse online to find old photographs, memorabilia, and items that have become "lost" over time. You never know what you might discover. One woman recovered a sampler that a relative had sold; another woman found a photograph of a family she'd been researching. You

might locate postcards of an ancestral hometown or pages from a family Bible. The items you locate will be treasured by your family. (See Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak's article in the May/June 2003 issue of *Ancestry* entitled "Returning Lost Heirlooms," online at <[www.ancestry.com/library/view/ancmag/7643.asp](http://www.ancestry.com/library/view/ancmag/7643.asp)> to learn the best strategies for finding these family heirlooms.)


## Projects Just for Kids

Family tree projects can lend themselves to all age groups. For instance, a simple branch stuck in a pot of cement can become a way to illustrate family history. Let children use photocopies of heritage photographs, or make cutouts in various shapes hang from the tree using stencils, cookie cutters, and construction paper. They can write their

**Whatever your interest  
or skill level, you can  
find a gift idea that  
expresses your love  
of family—both  
past and present.**



names and those of their family under the photos or on the paper and hang them from the branches using string or yarn. Or make a wooden template of a tree and let them decorate it in a similar fashion. Show children family art that has been created in past generations like those in *The Art of Family: Genealogical Artifacts in New England* by D. Brenton Simons and Peter Benes (NEHGS, 2002). Children can mimic the designs with paper and markers using genealogical data supplied by adults. Older children can cut fabric trees to make a quilted square for a pillow or wall hanging or use simple stitches to create a sampler.

Family history gifts represent the heart and soul of genealogical pursuits. Each one represents a leaf on the family tree or a whole branch. Whatever your interest or skill level, you can find a gift idea that expresses your love of family—both past and present. What better way to celebrate the holidays? 

*Maureen A. Taylor is the author of Scrapbooking Your Family History (Betterway 2003) and Preserving Your Family Photographs (Betterway 2001). She can be reached at [mtaylor@taylorandstrong.com](mailto:mtaylor@taylorandstrong.com).*





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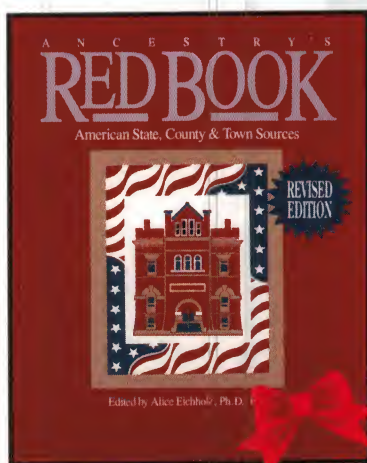
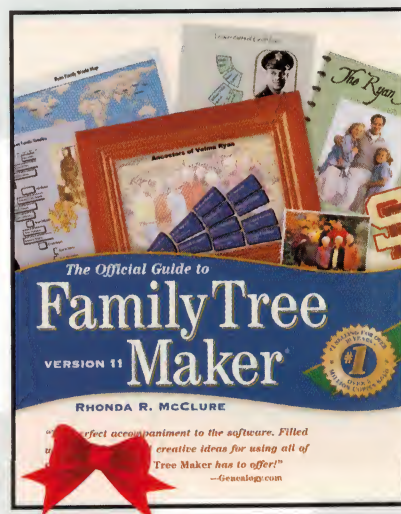
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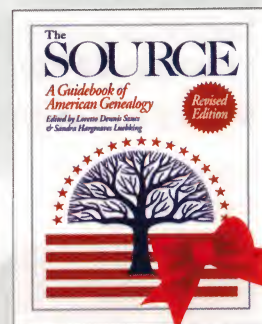


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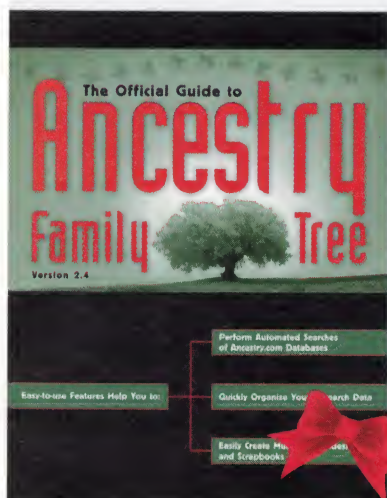
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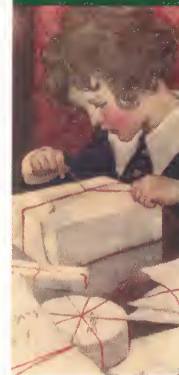
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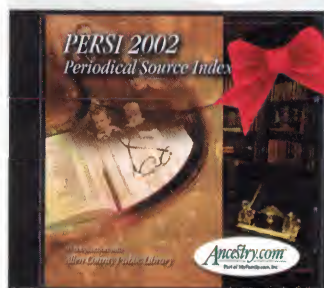
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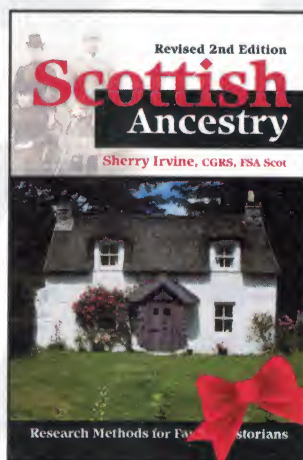


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Iowa, East  
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Wisconsin, South  
Georgia, North  
Georgia, South  
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Alabama, South  
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Virginia, West  
West Virginia, Northeast  
West Virginia, Southwest  
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Nebraska  
Colorado  
Oregon  
Michigan, North  
Michigan, South  
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**The Great Lakes region** of the United States is usually referred to as the Midwest, although geographically its states are more central and eastern than they are part of the west. The six states discussed in this article—Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin—together formed the first possession of the new United States of America, the Northwest Territory.

But before the United States took possession, the area was actively explored by the French as early as 1634. Names from the history books highlight early discoveries in this region, including Marquette and Jolliet, and LaSalle. The early explorers were often missionaries as well, and early alliances were formed with native American tribes. Trading became common at small outposts that sometimes turned into permanent settlements. The most actively traded commodity was fur, and the most active traders in this area were the French traveling from modern-day Quebec.

Conflict between the British, who were settling in the eastern Ohio area, and the French ultimately led to the French and Indian Wars, which ended in 1763 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. By treaty, Britain was granted Canada and the Old Northwest, which included most of the territory under discussion here, with the exception of the western portion of Minnesota. Following the end of the American Revolution, the Old Northwest area became U.S. territory, and was formed into the Northwest Territory in 1787. The township system for surveying was established in 1785, making this area the first to fall under the designation “Federal-land states” (there are exceptions in Ohio as noted here). Many of the records mentioned here can be found at the Family History Library. Search its catalog online at <[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)>. And don’t forget the tremendous records available at the National Archives Great Lakes Region located in Chicago, Illinois. It has indexes for federal court records, including naturalization, World War I and World War II draft cards, among other treasures related to these states. Search online at <[www.nara.gov/regional/chicago.html](http://www.nara.gov/regional/chicago.html)>.

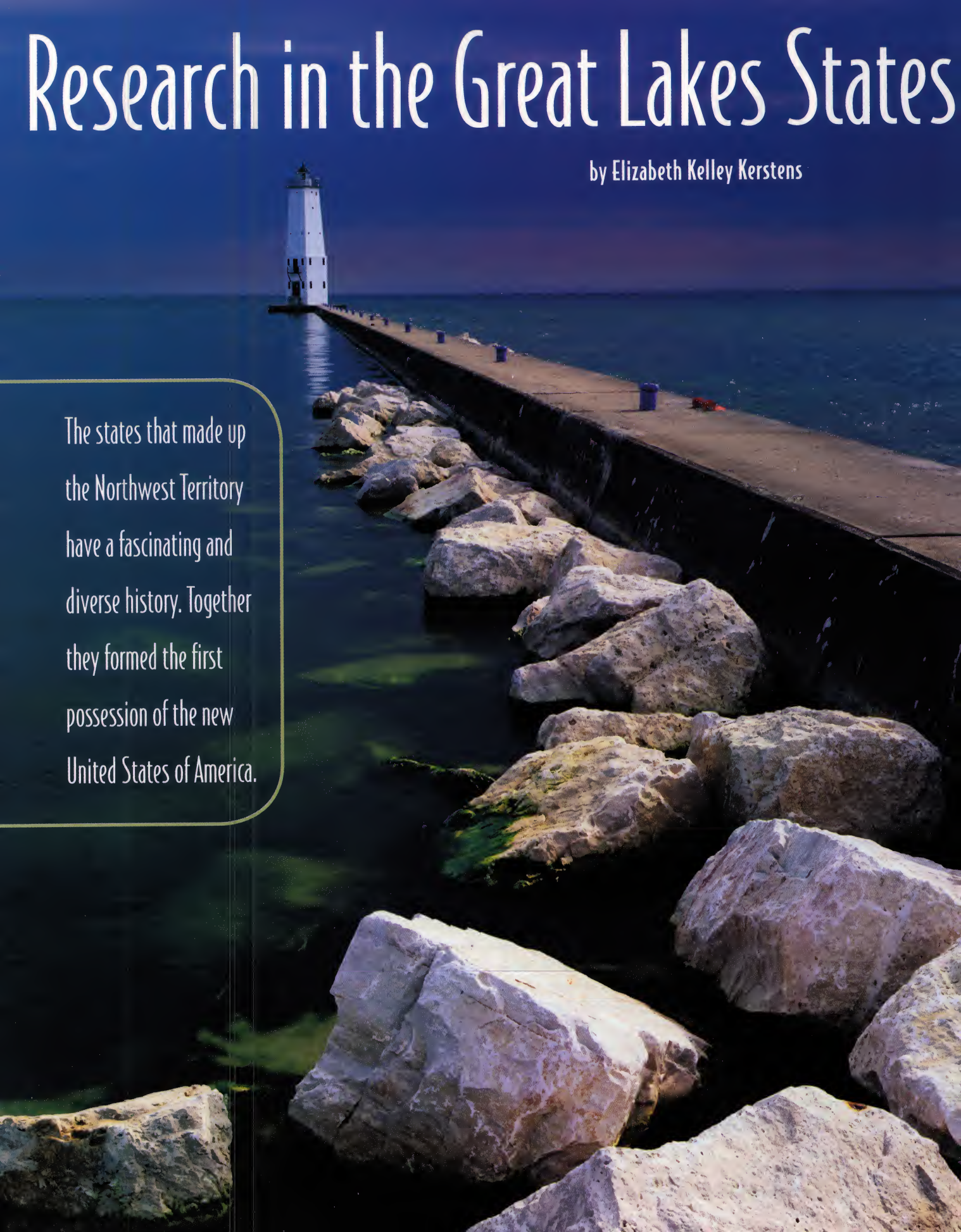




# Research in the Great Lakes States

by Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens

The states that made up the Northwest Territory have a fascinating and diverse history. Together they formed the first possession of the new United States of America.





# Illinois

Illinois State Historical Library  
Old State Capitol  
Springfield, IL 62701-1507  
217-524-7216  
Fax 217-785-6250  
[www.state.il.us/hpa/lib](http://www.state.il.us/hpa/lib)

Illinois State Archives  
Norton Building  
Capitol Complex  
Springfield, IL 62756  
217-782-4682  
Fax 217-524-3930  
[www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/archives.html](http://www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/archives.html)

Illinois Department of Public Health  
535 West Jefferson Street  
Springfield, IL 62761  
217-782-6553  
Fax 217-523-2648  
[www.idph.state.il.us/vital/vitalhome.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/vital/vitalhome.htm)

The Newberry Library  
60 W. Walton St.  
Chicago, IL 60610-7324  
312-943-9090  
[www.newberry.org](http://www.newberry.org)

## Illinois

Illinois was discovered in 1763 by French explorers Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette. A settlement was founded in Cahokia in 1699, and in 1717 the Illinois area became part of French Louisiana. Illinois became part of Indiana Territory in 1800. The Illinois Territory was created in 1809 and just nine years later, in 1818, Illinois became the twenty-first state.

Registration of births and deaths began statewide in 1916. The Illinois State Archives has vital records indexes and some certificates for counties as early as 1843; these records would also be available from the county clerks. Marriage licenses were not required until 1877, but records are available at some counties as early as 1790. The State of Illinois offers a multitude of very useful searchable databases on its website at [www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/databases.html](http://www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/databases.html), including:

- A statewide marriage index for the years 1763–1900 at [www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/marriage.html](http://www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/marriage.html).

- Two statewide death indexes—an incomplete index for the years before 1916 at [www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/death.html](http://www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/death.html), and one for the period 1916–1950 at [www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/death.html](http://www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/death.html).
- Eight of the nine volumes of *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois* containing Illinois' Civil War veterans are searchable at [www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/dacivil.html](http://www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/dacivil.html).
- The ninth volume of the aforementioned series contains some Spanish-American War veterans; these are searchable at [www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/spanam.html](http://www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/spanam.html).

If you're looking for land records on an Illinois ancestor, you have several options. If the person was an early French settler, there may be a private land claim filed by the settler or his descendants. These records are available at the National Archives—at either Washington D.C. or the Regional Archives in Chicago. If the ancestor might have purchased land from the government, the patent files are searchable in two places: Bureau of Land Management at [www.glorecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch/](http://www.glorecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch/) and Illinois Public Domain Land Tract Sales at [www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/data\\_lan.html](http://www.ilsos.net/departments/archives/data_lan.html). Other land transactions are handled by the court recorder of deeds. The Illinois State Archives has territorial and state censuses for the period 1810–1865, some of which are indexed.

## Indiana

René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle was the first explorer to set foot in Indiana, in 1679. After exploring the entire length of the Mississippi River, La Salle claimed the whole Mississippi basin for the French and named it Louisiana, for King Louis XIV. In the early 1700s, the French built several forts, but the only settlement that survived was at Vincennes. Indiana Territory was formed in 1800 and included the western part of the Northwest Territory encompassing present-day Wisconsin, Illinois, most of Indiana, the eastern part of Minnesota, and the western half of Michigan. Michigan became a territory in 1805 and Illinois became its own territory in 1809. Indiana became the nineteenth state in 1816.

Birth records are available from the Indiana State Board of Health beginning in October 1907, but not all births were registered until 1917. The death records begin in about 1900. To locate records before statewide registration, contact the health office of each county. Marriage records were not kept on the state level until 1958, so records before that time would be available at the county clerk's office. A searchable database of Indiana marriages through 1850 is available at [www.statelib.lib.in.us/www/ISL/indiana/](http://www.statelib.lib.in.us/www/ISL/indiana/)



genealogy/mirr.html>. Also check the WPA-created indexes for birth, marriage, and death at Ancestry.com. The WPA began to index vital records, county-by-county, for the entire state, but the agency was abolished before the project was completed. Only sixty-eight of the ninety-two counties had their birth and death records (1882–1920) and marriages (generally 1850–1920) collected. The completed county indexes are available in print at the Indiana State Library and Allen County Public Library, among others.

Probate records can be found with the county clerk or the clerk of the circuit court, except Marion and St. Joseph's counties have their own probate courts.

As is the case with Illinois, private land claims for lands owned by individuals before the United States took possession are available at the National Archives, if the land owner or descendants filed the claim. Some early land records have been published. Public land sales can be searched in two



places: at the Bureau of Land Management's website at <[www.glorerecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch/](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch/)> and on the Indiana State Archives' website at <[www.in.gov/icpr/archives/databases/](http://www.in.gov/icpr/archives/databases/)>. Other land records are available through the county recorder. Other

searchable databases of interest are the Indiana World War II database at <<http://199.8.200.90:591/wwii.html>>, and the Indianapolis Newspapers Database for 1848–1888 at <<http://199.8.200.90:591/newsindex.html>>.

State or territorial censuses exist, partially or in fragments, for 1807, 1810, 1820, 1853, 1856, 1857, and 1877. Many of the records discussed above are available from the Family History Library.

## Michigan

Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac landed at the site of present-day Detroit in July 1701 to settle the area in the name

## Indiana

Indiana State Library  
140 N. Senate Avenue  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
317-232-3675  
[www.statelib.lib.in.us/](http://www.statelib.lib.in.us/)

Indiana State Archives  
6440 E. 30th St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46219  
317-591-5222  
[www.in.gov/icpr/archives/](http://www.in.gov/icpr/archives/)

Vital Records Department  
Indiana State Department of Health  
2 North Meridian Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
317-233-2700  
[www.in.gov/isdh/bdcertifs/birth\\_and\\_death\\_certificates.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/bdcertifs/birth_and_death_certificates.htm)

Allen County Public Library  
200 East Berry Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
260-421-1200  
[www.acpl.lib.in.us/](http://www.acpl.lib.in.us/)

## Michigan

Library of Michigan  
702 West Kalamazoo Street  
Lansing, MI 48909  
517-373-1580  
Fax 517-373-4480  
[www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17445\\_19270---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17445_19270---,00.html)

State Archives of Michigan  
702 West Kalamazoo Street  
Lansing, MI 48909  
517-373-1414  
[www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17445\\_19273\\_19313---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17445_19273_19313---,00.html)

Michigan Department of Community Health  
Vital Records Requests  
P.O. Box 30721  
Lansing, MI 48909  
[www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-4645---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-4645---,00.html)

Burton Historical Collection  
Detroit Public Library  
5201 Woodward Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48202  
313-833-1480  
[www.detroit.lib.mi.us/burton/](http://www.detroit.lib.mi.us/burton/)





## As with Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan, the first settlers in Minnesota were French Canadian fur trappers and missionaries.

of King Louis XIV of France. The initial fort that was built was named Fort Ponchartrain du Detroit, which eventually was shortened to Detroit. Following the French and Indian War, the forts at Detroit and Michilimackinac—in upper lower Michigan—were under British control until 1796 when Jay's Treaty was signed.

In 1805 Michigan was made a territory that later, in 1818, included present-day Wisconsin. During the War of 1812, Detroit fell again into British hands and wasn't liberated until 1813. Michigan became the twenty-sixth state in 1837.

Registration of births and deaths began on the state and county level in 1867, but full compliance was not achieved until about 1915. Because of this nearly fifty-year period when records were not always sent to the state, it is recommended that researchers write first to the clerk in the county of birth or death, if known. This may save time and money if the search is unsuccessful at the state level. Death records can be searched online at the Genealogical Death Index System at <[www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/gendisx/search.htm](http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/gendisx/search.htm)> for the period 1867–1897 (as of this writing). Marriage records have been kept by most counties since their formation and can be found by writing to the county clerk.

Probate records have been kept by Wayne County since 1797 and other counties since about 1817. These records are available from the clerk of the probate court. The Library of Michigan has many of the records discussed above on microfilm. The state library also has an online index to naturalizations at <[www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17449\\_18635\\_20684---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17449_18635_20684---,00.html)>, which doesn't include Wayne County as of this writing.

There are several options for finding land records for a Michigan ancestor. If the person was an early French Canadian settler, there may be a private land claim filed by the settler or his descendants. These records are available at the National Archives—at either Washington D.C. or the Regional Archives in Chicago. Records of public land bought through the General Land Office are available from the Bureau of Land Management and can be searched online at <[www.glorecords.blm.gov/](http://www.glorecords.blm.gov/)>. Records for land that was bought and sold between individuals would be available from the county registrar of deeds.

A number of territorial and state censuses were taken between the years 1810 and 1904, but they are difficult to locate and censuses for many counties no longer survive.

The 1870 Federal Census for Michigan has been completely indexed, with images linked to index entries on the Library of Michigan website at <[http://envoy.libraryofmichigan.org/1870\\_census/](http://envoy.libraryofmichigan.org/1870_census/)>.

### Minnesota

As with Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan, the first settlers in Minnesota were French Canadian fur trappers and missionaries. The land west of the Mississippi River became

## Minnesota

Minnesota Historical Society  
345 Kellogg Blvd. West  
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906  
651-296-6126  
[www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org)

Minnesota State Archives  
345 Kellogg Blvd. West  
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906  
651-297-4502  
Fax 651-296-9961  
[www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/index.html](http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/index.html)

Minnesota Department of Health  
Attention: Office of the State Registrar  
P.O. Box 9441  
Minneapolis, MN 55440-9441  
[www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/osr/index.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/osr/index.html)

Immigration History Research Center  
University of Minnesota  
College of Liberal Arts  
311 Andersen Library  
222-21st Avenue S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0439  
612-625-4800  
Fax 612-626-0018  
[www1.umn.edu/ihr](http://www1.umn.edu/ihr)



U.S. soil with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Because of boundary disputes, British fur companies were in Minnesota until 1818 when the Minnesota boundary was fixed at the 49th parallel. American fur traders first entered the Minnesota area in 1815. Wisconsin Territory was formed in 1836, of which Minnesota was a part. In 1849, Minnesota became a territory, and it achieved statehood in 1858, as the 32nd state.

The Minnesota Department of Health has birth records from 1900 and death records from 1908. Death records can be searched online at the Minnesota Historical Society for the period 1908–1996 at <<http://people.mnhs.org/dci/Search.cfm>>. If you find the person you're looking for, you can order a copy of the death certificate from a printable form on the website. For records before 1900, contact the county vital statistics officer. Marriage records are located with the counties and can usually be found close to the time the county was created. Probate records can be found at the probate clerk's office.

Public land sales in Minnesota were first handled at the general land office in Wisconsin, beginning in 1848, but were moved to Stillwater, Minnesota, in 1849. These records can be searched at the Bureau of Land Management's website at <[www.glorecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch/](http://www.glorecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch/)>. For local land transactions, the county registrar of deeds should be contacted.

Minnesotans were enumerated in both the Wisconsin and Iowa Territorial censuses in 1836, 1838, and 1840. Minnesota Territorial censuses exist for 1849, 1850, 1855, and 1857, and state censuses were taken in 1865, 1875, 1885, and 1905. Ancestry.com has an index for the 1849 Minnesota territorial census, as well as an index to tax lists for 1835–1839. The Family History Library catalog should be checked for other Minnesota records.

## Ohio

Of the six states covered in this article, Ohio's history is the most complex and varies from the standard formula of French explorers and fur trappers to English domination. The western portion of Ohio was used extensively by French fur trappers, but the eastern portion was settled by British adventurers in the early 1700s. This mixed-use land caused considerable conflict between the French and British and resulted in the French and Indian War. The entire area was given to the British following the war, but because of Native American unrest, settlement was discouraged. The end of the Revolutionary War began the tumultuous claim for Ohio lands between states that claimed the area as their western boundaries and the new federal government. Ohio Territory was formed in 1799. In 1800, the western part of Ohio Territory became part of the newly

## Ohio

State Library of Ohio  
274 E. First Avenue  
Columbus, OH 43201  
614-644-7061  
<http://winslo.state.oh.us>

Ohio Historical Society  
1982 Velma Avenue  
Columbus, OH 43211  
614-297-2300  
[www.ohiohistory.org](http://www.ohiohistory.org)

Ohio Department of Health  
Revenue Room  
246 North High Street  
P.O. Box 15098  
Columbus, OH 43215-0098

Western Reserve Historical Society  
10825 East Boulevard  
Cleveland, OH 44106  
216-721-5722  
[www.wrhs.org](http://www.wrhs.org)

Public Library of Cincinnati/Hamilton County  
800 Vine Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202-2071  
513-369-6900  
[www.cincinnatilibrary.org](http://www.cincinnatilibrary.org)

created Indiana Territory. Ohio became the first state created from the Northwest Territory, in 1803, making it the seventeenth state in the Union. There isn't room in this brief discussion of Ohio to explain the various divisions of land, but for a quick overview visit the Evolution of Ohio at <[www.oplin.lib.oh.us/products/build/](http://www.oplin.lib.oh.us/products/build/)>.

Beginning in 1867, counties were required to maintain birth and death records. Some counties have earlier records. Statewide registration began in 1908. A searchable online database of deaths (1913–1937) is available at <[www.ohiohistory.org/dindex/](http://www.ohiohistory.org/dindex/)>. Marriage records are available from the local probate courts, and some can be found at the Ohio Historical Society, which is the official state library and archives. Marriages from 1949 will be found at the Ohio Department of Health.

Land records for Ohio can be found in a multitude of places; this is where knowing the history of the specific



# Wisconsin

Wisconsin Historical Society  
816 State Street  
Madison, WI 53706  
608-264-6400  
[www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org)

Wisconsin Vital Records  
P.O. Box 309  
Madison, WI 53701-0309  
[www.dhfs.state.wi.us/VitalRecords/](http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/VitalRecords/)

regions of Ohio is critical. Records for Western Reserve lands can be found at the state level in Connecticut; bounty land warrants from Virginia are located at the Virginia State Library; many early land records can be found at the Ohio Land Office; but, local records would be held by the county recorder. Quadrennial censuses were enumerated on the township level for the period 1803–1911, but not all areas survive. The Ohio Historical Society has some Civil War records searchable on its website at [www.ohiohistory.org/resource/database/civilwar.html](http://www.ohiohistory.org/resource/database/civilwar.html).

## Wisconsin

The first explorer to see Wisconsin was Jean Nicolet, a native of France, in 1634. He was searching for the Northwest Passage to China. Other explorers visited the area over the next century, and in 1648 the first trading post was set up at La Baye. Despite the ending of the American Revolution, the British retained control of Wisconsin until the War of 1812. The area's territorial government changed four more times before it became a state. It became part of Indiana Territory in 1800; Illinois Territory in 1809; Michigan Territory in 1818; and finally Wisconsin Territory in 1836, which included the area west of the Mississippi River to the Missouri River. When Iowa Territory was formed in 1838, a great deal of the western part of the territory was taken away. Wisconsin became the thirtieth state in 1847.

Statewide registration of births and deaths began in

1907. These records are available at the Wisconsin Historical Society. The society offers a search service for birth and death records from 1850 to 1907 on its website at [www.wisconsinhistory.org/genealogy/ogrs/index.html](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/genealogy/ogrs/index.html). It will also search marriage records from 1836 to 1907 and Civil War service records, all for a fee. Some of these records are also searchable at Ancestry.com.

County courthouses have the remainder of local records of interest to genealogists, including deeds, wills, and taxpayer lists. Some of Wisconsin's early residents may be found in the private land claims available at the National Archives—at either Washington D.C. or the Regional Archives in Chicago. General Land Office records for public land sales can be searched on the Bureau of Land Management's website at [www.glorerecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch/](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch/).

There are many opportunities to find early Wisconsin residents in territorial and state censuses, from 1820 to 1905. The Wisconsin Historical Society's website has a searchable Wisconsin Name Index at [www.wisconsinhistory.org/wni/](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/wni/), which was created from obituaries, personal sketches, and biographies. Additionally, you can search the Roster of Wisconsin Volunteers, War of the Rebellion, 1861–1865 online at [www.wisconsinhistory.org/roster/index.html](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/roster/index.html).

## Conclusion

The states that made up the Northwest Territory have a fascinating and diverse history. Because of the space limitation here, researchers interested in a particular state's records and history should fully explore the resources available for that state. Because of the diversity of the area, specific immigrant group records should also be consulted. And don't overlook the wealth of information available at the National Archives concerning the territories. For more information on this topic, consult the author's article "Go West, Young Man! Discovering Your Frontier Ancestors" online at [www.ancestry.com/library/view/ancmag/5604.asp](http://www.ancestry.com/library/view/ancmag/5604.asp). ❧

*Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens, CGRS, CGL, is the managing editor of Genealogical Computing and a frequent contributor to Ancestry Magazine.*



by Terry and Jim Willard

**T**raditionally, the availability of research materials was largely contingent upon onsite research. In order to access much of the important data on their families, researchers went to the repository of the material. This usually meant a trip to the town or county office responsible for maintaining such data. If a trip was not feasible, correspondence, a very time-consuming activity, was required.

Other data was accessible at many public and private libraries, which had collections of quality published genealogical research materials. Usually, a trip to the local library to use these materials was easier and more productive than several trips to different town or county records offices.

But regardless of the method, genealogists had to physically engage in the research process. They had to get organized and out of the house in order to get their hands (or their eyes) on the data. The only real alternative to pencil and paper research at these locations was to acquire a personal collection of materials. Over a long period of time, a single dedicated genealogist could amass a remarkable collection of material. In fact, many genealogy societies and research libraries owe their existence to these individual collections when the collector willed his or her personal libraries to such groups.

The end of the twentieth century saw a change in the entire process. Genealogical research data proved very adaptable to the digital revolution. Information previously accessible only through direct contact with the document itself was now available through a variety of media, such as CD-ROM. Now genealogists have the option of beginning their own collections of data CDs, similar to the book libraries that previous generations of researchers created and used.

If you're wondering if CD-ROM



research is right for you, consider the following:

- Are you computer literate?
- Do you have a computer with a CD or DVD disk drive?
- Are you living in an area far from where your ancestors lived?
- Do you have many ancestors who lived in the same area?

If you answered “yes” to these questions, CDs are a research option to pursue. Through your local library, Family History Center, or genealogical society, you can learn about the published CDs from which your research could benefit. Once you locate the appropriate CD, it is a simple matter to insert the CD into the CD drive (or DVD drive) on your computer and follow the instructions that appear on the screen. If you are really fortunate, printed instructions might be included with the disc.

Here are some tips to keep in mind to make the move from onsite to digital research a little easier.

**1** Be certain the CD has enough relevant data to make the purchase worthwhile. Some researchers purchase a CD because it promises millions of names. Once home and loaded into the computer, however, they discover that there is little information relevant to their research.

If possible, go to your local library or Family History Center to “test drive” the CD before purchasing it. While it might be necessary to sign up in advance at these locations in order to use the computer(s), it would be time well spent. Another option to consider prior to making a purchase is to talk to other researchers at conferences and workshops. These provide great opportunities for gathering tips and possibly even seeing a demonstration of a CD if there is a vendor selling



CDs. This way you get to decide for yourself if a particular CD is worth your money.

**2** Be certain that the CD is appropriate for your computer's operating system. While not as common now, there are still CDs on the market that are designed for a specific operating system. Also, make sure your system has the "right stuff" for the CD, such as the necessary RAM and the appropriate storage capacity on the hard drive (usually measured in megabytes or gigabytes).


**3** Be certain you have other software installed on your computer that might be required to access the data on the CD. Many data CDs require Adobe *Acrobat Reader* to view the data on the disk, since many genealogical data files are created as portable document files, or .pdf files. The Adobe *Acrobat Reader* will allow you to view this type of file on your computer. The installer is sometimes on the CD along with the data, but if it is not, it can be downloaded free of charge from the Adobe website at <[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)>.

**4** Be certain there are directions for installing and using the CD. Nothing is more frustrating than having a CD pertinent to your research but not knowing how to access the data it contains. Most CDs now are the "load and go" type, which means you simply insert the disk into the appropriate drive and you are ready to research. However, some are more obtuse and require some additional maneuvering before getting to the information.

**5** Be certain the CD is "searchable." Regardless of how many pages or how many names a CD contains, the

information is useless unless you can search the material and pinpoint the data relevant to your research. Most commercial CDs have built-in search-

## Genealogical research data proved very adaptable to the digital revolution—in the form of CD-ROMs.



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**Global Genealogy & History Shoppe**  
[www.globalgenealogy.com](http://www.globalgenealogy.com)

**Willow Bend Books**  
[www.willowbendbooks.com](http://www.willowbendbooks.com)

**New England Historic Genealogy Society (NEHGS)**  
[www.newenglandancestors.org](http://www.newenglandancestors.org)

**Quintin Publications**  
[www.quintinpublications.com](http://www.quintinpublications.com)

**The Shops@Ancestry**  
<http://shops.ancestry.com>

ing capability. The instructions will tell you how to use this feature.

If you have widespread research needs and are considering purchasing several CDs, it might be useful to buy from a publisher that creates a single

CD to serve as a "master index" for all of the CDs produced. Simply insert this index disk into the computer's drive, allow the data to load (patience is indeed a virtue here), then type in the name of the individual you are researching. If it finds information that matches the name you entered, the screen results will indicate which other disk contains this data. At this point, you will simply remove the index disk, insert the appropriate data disk, and view the information on the screen.

Where can you buy genealogical CDs? Virtually any company that carries books related to genealogy will also carry research CDs. Companies selling CDs tend to specialize in one of two ways: 1) publishing and selling their own titles so their CDs will only be available from them directly; and 2) specializing in particular geographic areas so the CDs are unique to those areas.

As is always the case, do your homework before considering any CD purchase.

The sidebar on this page includes the names and web address of some of the companies we have dealt with in the past. This listing is intended as a starting point for some places you can locate genealogy CDs.

The availability of research materials on CD-ROM is a very big reason genealogy has become the fastest-growing hobby in the country today. Remember, however, that CDs are identical to books in many ways. Most notably, there is no guarantee that the data contained on the disk is 100 percent accurate. Also, the CDs should be footnoted and documented just as traditional bound books. ❧

*Terry and Jim Willard hosted the ten-part PBS "Ancestors" series. They have researched their family history fifteen generations back on both sides.*



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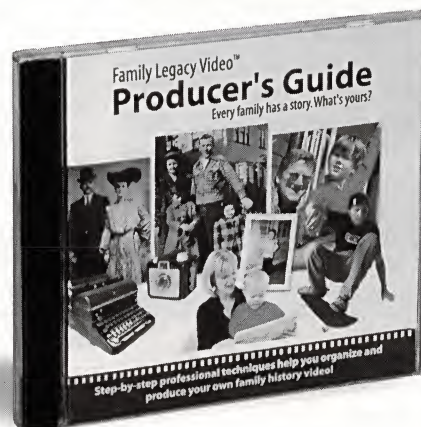
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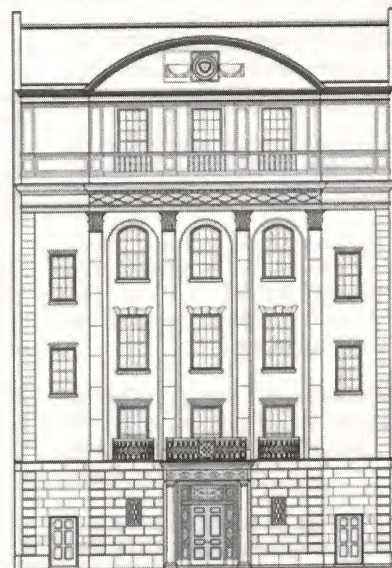
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#325R. *Abstracts of Lancaster County, PA Deed Records (Books R-U) including areas now comprising Dauphin and Lebanon Counties, 1774-1789 Vol. 2* by Ed Wevodau 8.5x11." Laminated. 227pp.....\$25.00

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#327. *Abstracts of Lancaster County, PA Orphans Court Records, 1768-1782* by Ed Wevodau. 8.5x11". Paper. 210p.....\$20.00

#328. *Abstracts of Lancaster County, PA Orphans Court Records, 1782-1791* by Ed Wevodau. 8.5x11". Paper. 254pp.....\$24.95

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**NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PA**

#323. *Abstracts and Deeds and Other Property Records, Northampton County, PA, Volume 3* by Candace A. Anderson (2003). 8.5x11." Laminated. 345pp.....\$36.00

**(W) VIRGINIA****Brooke County, (W)VA**

NEW! • #367. *Will Abstracts of Brooke Co, (W)VA, 1850-1900* by Ken McFarland. Brooke County was formed out of Ohio County, and, until the formation of Hancock County in 1848, it comprised the northern half of the Virginia Panhandle. Important area from a historian's viewpoint as a great amount of westward migration was funneled through the upper Ohio valley region. A number of the testators described themselves as residents of the adjoining states of Ohio and Pennsylvania. Each abstract names legatees specifying the relationships stated, executors and witnesses, giving residences other than Brooke County, mentions land elsewhere, and gives the date of writing, of codicils and of recording as well as book and page reference to the original volume. Index. 8.5x11." Laminated. 91pp.....\$12.00

#503. *Will Abstracts of Brooke Co., (W)VA, 1797-1849* by Ken McFarland. An earlier version of the above book. Index. 8.5x11". Laminated. 88pp.....\$9.50

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## As American as Apple Pie

by Roseann Reinemuth Hogan, Ph.D., and Derek Agard

*"Mrs. Shimerda ... measured a teacup full, and presented it ceremoniously to Grandmother... That night...Grandmother ... threw the package into the stove, but I bit off a corner of one of the chips I held in my hand.... I never forgot the strange taste; though it was many years before I knew that those little brown shavings, which the Shimerdas had brought so far and treasured so jealously, were dried mushrooms. They had been gathered, probably, in some deep Bohemian forest..." (excerpted from *My Antonia* by Willa Cather 1977, pp. 77-79)*

Those of us involved in family history research want to know more than the names and dates of events in our ancestors' lives. We also want to understand our families and their experiences, to capture even the smallest insight into what life was like for them. Who were they? What did they leave behind for us to discover? How have they influenced our lives?

There are many ways to discover these details, but the traditional focus has generally been on the material remnants they left behind: a log cabin, the family Bible, a piece of furniture, a single delicate china cup said to have

been brought over with them on the ship that brought them to America. In addition to these tangible items, our ancestors also brought patterns of thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs with them from the old world, leaving us a rich source of information in the cultural templates of their lives, one that is perhaps more satisfying and ultimately more intriguing. This ethnic identity may be expressed in many of their everyday practices, religious observations, language, clothing, music, celebrations, and even in the foods they ate—perhaps especially in the food.

### Immigrants and Food Preparation

Some traditions, such as apple pie and potato salad on the Fourth of July, seem timeless and unchanging, but all traditions began sometime. Immigrants coming to America had to adapt their cooking to their new circumstances while also attempting to maintain the integrity of their origins. As traditions around food continue to crop up in America, family historians should pay attention, since these traditions may provide important clues to family origins or even to origins of other traditions.

During the immigration experience, most families attempted to retain at least some traditional or family recipes as reminders of the "old country." Food represented their old lives and reminded immigrants of their youth, their families, and their homes. Immigrants were perhaps more likely to



attempt to keep their recipes unaltered through the years precisely because of their symbolic importance, which was no doubt increased during the holidays when feelings of yearning toward the old country and family members were at their strongest.

Our ancestors' recipes from the old country generally fell into one of two categories: 1) recipes that were adapted because ingredients could not be duplicated in America due to lack of availability or high cost, and 2) recipes that remained largely intact because of their holiday importance. The degree to which the recipe remained intact may indicate the significance of the emotional link it provided to the immigrant family or it may simply indicate the availability of the ingredients, although the former appears more likely. Other factors also influenced the changes that took place, such as a new bride who often had her own way of doing things and her own family traditions to carry on.

### Tradition and Food

Latkes to a Jewish family and fried potato pancakes to a Catholic or Protestant German family enjoyed lowly status in the home country and eastern



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**“Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are.”**

—Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

Europe before 1900. So our ancestors would be surprised to see just how much we view them as a specialty today served with sour cream and applesauce. But again, many dishes were likely to obtain more sentimental status in America than in the “old country.”

Another central and eastern European tradition is pierogi: delicate pastries, sometimes savory and sometimes sweet, that are stuffed with various fillings. The use of pastries with any sort of filling is characteristic of central and eastern Europe. While they are a daily staple, they are often used in the United States as a holiday treat.

A Catholic and otherwise southern European tradition was to eat fish on Christmas Eve, often after midnight. In Poland and Germany, dishes such as pickled herring and “rollmops” were and are very popular. Throughout northern Europe, dishes we would today call “sweet and sour” or “hot and sour” were especially prevalent in recipes with fish. “Sweet and sour carp,” as well as the more mundane “sweet and sour cabbage,” were not holiday specialties; rather “sweet and sour” reflects the practical use of leftover fruit and meat in daily cooking.

Our first European Americans adapted their English pies to American ingredients and cooking circumstances. The pies became more shallow, were sweeter and circular, and had new ingredients that were easily at hand, such as pumpkin. This made them easier to cook and to store.

Many of our current food traditions associated with Halloween trace their origins to Scotland. To our Scottish forebears we owe gratitude, for the American celebration of Halloween has evolved separately and taken

on new life and from thence moved back to Europe. In 1735, under King George II, a law concerning witchcraft prohibited the eating of pork and pastry on Halloween. Today “pigs in a blanket” remains a popular autumnal treat. And a European tradition is to display jack o’lanterns on Halloween (previously the tradition was to use turnips rather than pumpkins).

## Traditional American Dishes

No holiday in the United States is as completely American as Thanksgiving. While in the last thirty years turkey and cranberries have become almost mainstays in the national diet, other foods such as pumpkin pie remain quite distinct as a holiday item: it retains its place as a national dish to honor the first Thanksgiving. The history here may be our Elizabethan and Jacobean English ancestors who were unsurpassed on this matter of pies: shepherd’s pie (generally consisting of lamb and vegetables) and cottage pie (generally consisting of beef and vegetables) were very popular among the first English settlers in America.

Another uniquely American holiday and an increasingly popular holiday among Americans is “June-



## Internet Sources

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teenth." This holiday dates back to the day African Americans in Texas and Tennessee learned that they were no longer slaves. It should come as no surprise that this southern celebration involves the ceremonial digging of a barbecue pit and the slow barbecuing of lamb, pork, and beef. In the so-called border states of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, lamb and mutton are more likely to be used. Otherwise, pork is often the exclusive delicacy.

To the extent that you can this holiday season, look around your own table as you sit down to eat. What do you see in your own family traditions of the influences of other cultures? What traditions do you see in the books and movies you enjoy?

And as you settle down for your traditional reading of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dick-

ens, you might notice for the first time his colorful descriptions of food, of "turkeys, geese, game, poultry, ... great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince pies, plum puddings, barrels of oysters, red hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, twelfth-night cakes...." And perhaps for the first time, you might think of your ancestors, what they ate, and how their traditional recipes have impacted you. ♪

*Roseann Reinemuth Hogan, Ph.D., has been researching her family history since 1978. Her special interests include oral histories and social history. Derek Agard, a software training manager for Gateway Computers, has a masters degree in political science.*



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My Dear Wife

We are all well and I wish you a Happy new year and now I recollect [sic] that last year at this time I was in Providence. Now I am in Virginia. Where shall I be next January. Perhaps at Home.

Thus begins one of many letters written by my great-great-grandfather Captain Joseph Collingwood of the 18th Massachusetts Regiment, to his wife, Rebecca, in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

From our perspective 140 years later, we can look back to "next January" and answer his question. On 7 January 1863, the *Boston Herald* printed an account of the Battle of Fredericksburg and listed "Capt. Joseph W. Collingwood, Co. H, wounded and died Dec. 24th." Joseph's contemplation of his future had been resolved in a manner far too familiar to families with loved ones who served in the Civil War.

Over a two-year period, Collingwood wrote home every few days with accounts of his daily activities, personal opinions, and thoughts of home. Our family is fortunate to have more than 300 of these letters written by Joseph after he left for battle, as well as letters written by his wife and children. Through the years, their thoughtful descendants chose to save this rewarding and diverse collection. It is a precious part of our family's heritage.

The Collingwood letters were uncovered by my mother's cousin in his parents' attic. It is typical of where and how many people discover their family mementos. As much as I would love to own these letters myself, or have them readily available to use, they have been wisely and safely archived within the collections of the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. There they can be reviewed by other family members, studied by



## Diaries and Letters of Our Ancestors

by Laura G. Prescott

Civil War scholars, and appreciated by anyone who wishes to learn about the time period or circumstances through a contemporary account.

Few things give genealogists better insights into the lives of their ancestors than words written by their ancestors or by those sharing a similar history. Whether it be a community, a home, an historic event, or a social niche, personal contemporary accounts give us the best perspective of what life was really like for them. A diary, letter, journal, and anything else penned at the time of an event can transform our genealogical databases of dry dates and names into a living ancestral legacy.

### Using Letters and Journals

Even if your ancestors never wrote a single word that survived the years, it does not mean their life isn't recorded somewhere. Circumstances similar to theirs may be available in a personal account written by another. If you can find a relationship, either through bloodlines or common bonds, you'll discover a way to understand and add

depth to your family's history. Look for similarities in lifestyle, social status, profession, or neighborhood. All of these can give you a good sense of how your ancestors lived.

But don't just take their word for it. Because some writers limit their accounts to weather, business transactions, grand events, or the trivial, you may often get the impression that life was dull and the writer did little. It is exciting to find the exception, when someone takes the time and has the skill and imagination to detail routines, observe social patterns, record community events, and offer opinions on everything from religion and politics to the busybody down the street.

I purchased a diary on eBay whose author was no relation to me, but she lived in a town near and similar to a woman in my family's past. I had never heard of the woman, nor was I familiar with her surname, but I was hopeful that she would include the names of others who had a connection to my family. I found only a few common threads, but I had a great time



doing a bit of research to learn more about the author of the diary. I was then able to relate what I'd found in primary and secondary sources to her entries. Once I learned a little more about Mary Folsom's background, it was fun to read her words and match her birth and anniversary dates to the comments she recorded on the matching dates in 1872.

Some of the earliest diaries available for genealogists to read and inter-

munity, or a repository that specializes in the types of collections into which their family records fit. You may want to browse college or university collections for surnames and locations pertinent to your research.

Diaries, journals, and personal manuscripts are often transcribed and published within genealogical periodicals, most particularly within the more scholarly journals like the *New England Historical and Genealogical*

my Civil War ancestor's brother George. But I nearly missed this valuable connection because the diary was properly transcribed and the original author, using the flexible spelling of the day, wrote Collingwood with only one "l."

Also, be sure to look in catalogs related to places your ancestors lived—and remember to think collaterally! Those family papers that originated in Maine may have gone to a cousin, then passed on to a niece, who then left them to her favorite library in Des Moines.

William Matthews' *American Diaries*, an annotated bibliography of American diaries written prior to 1861, is one of many such indexes written by Matthews and continued by others. They offer remarkably detailed accounts of catalogued diaries and journals and where to find them. I find it fun to simply read through the descriptions, even when they have no connection with my family. A similarly valuable online index is the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC), operated by the Library of Congress at [www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/nucmc.html](http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/nucmc.html). In it you'll discover a host of personal treasures archived around the country.

Sometimes you can search online hoping to find a catalog entry or simple reference, and come across a digitized image of a journal, preserved in part or as a whole in a website's collection of digital resources. These are often accompanied by transcriptions of the same. If diaries intrigue you, you'll want to visit the Library of Congress American Memory Project at <http://memory.loc.gov>. Here you'll discover a fabulous array of digitized diaries and journals, complete with transcriptions. The interest in placing digital images on websites has grown enormously in the past year or two. It is no longer rare to find resources online that you would have previously

*Some of the greatest assets diary owners can give the genealogical community are transcriptions of diaries.*

pret were written by educated men, mostly clergy and scholars. Merchant, mariner, and military journals become more prolific late in the eighteenth century. And while accounts by women are available in Colonial America, they proliferate in the nineteenth century when voyages and trips and their attendant travel diaries became more common, plus social and educational improvements made it more acceptable for women to place their thoughts on diary pages. Westward migrations challenged men and women alike to record their journeys.

### *Locating Letters and Journals*

There are many places to find these writings. Historical societies and special collections within libraries are readily obvious. Two of my favorite places to find personal accounts are in locations as diverse as academic libraries and within scholarly journals.

Academic libraries are a resource regularly overlooked by family historians. Yet many families and individuals leave their papers and records to those institutions, whether it be an alma mater, an organization in the com-

*Register*, the *NGS Quarterly*, the *American Genealogist*, and others. They all have distinct indexes, yet a search in *PERSI* can result in many more choices.

One of the most exciting and rapidly growing "repositories" of family papers is the Internet. The Library of Congress, historical societies around the country, and individuals are placing digital images and transcriptions of personal accounts online. Searching within community databases on RootsWeb, or within a particular library catalog using "diary," "journal," "letters," or "family papers," coupled with a surname or place name can often yield positive results. (Hint: When searching Google or another search engine, don't use the term "journal" as it will often bring you to a community's newspaper website.)

The number of diaries, journals, and letters available online is staggering. Many people have taken the time to transcribe family texts to share with the world. Be mindful of spelling differences. In searching for Collingwood references online, I found a diary penned in California that mentioned



had to travel around the country to view in person.

The Film Study Center at Harvard University developed and maintains a website that offers valuable training for anyone wanting to understand more about using diaries for historical purposes. It uses *A Midwife's Tale, The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary 1785-1812* by Laurel Thatcher as its focus. Each page of the diary is online and the viewer is given the option of seeing the original handwriting or reading the transcribed text. If you find early American handwriting difficult to decipher, the DoHistory website at <[www.dohistory.com](http://www.dohistory.com)> also gives you a chance to try your hand at transcribing Martha Ballard's handwriting.

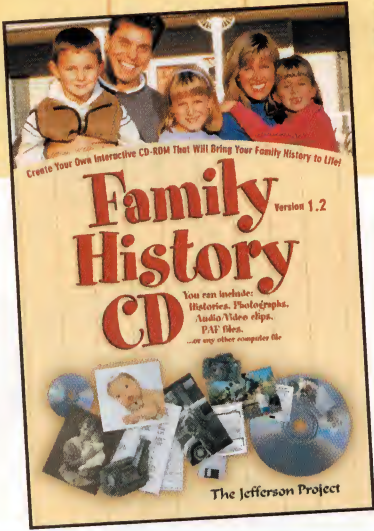
### For Posterity

A large number of diaries, journals, and letters are still in private hands. If you are fortunate enough to own a diary, journal, or collection of letters written by an ancestor, carefully preserve it for your descendants and others. Some of the greatest assets diary owners can give the genealogical community are transcriptions of diaries. It is also important to be sure originals are preserved and stored properly to save them from disintegration.

The Society of American Archivists has an online publication called "A Guide to Donating Your Personal or Family Papers to a Repository." Visit its website at <<http://archivists.org>>, click on "Resources," then "free online resources." As the text on the website so aptly states, "When you donate your personal or family papers to a manuscript repository, your family history becomes a part of your community's collective memory." ☞

*Laura G. Prescott is the membership campaign director for the New England Historic Genealogical Society.*

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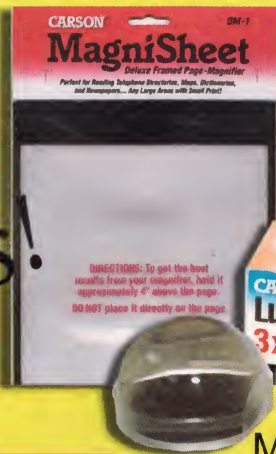
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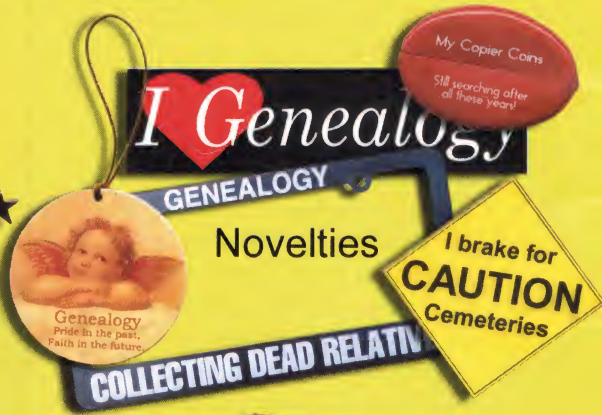


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Every week, my PC dutifully makes backup DAT tapes of the important information on my household network. The family genealogy, digital photographs, e-mail, favorite recipes, and my son's website bookmarks are saved in case one of our computers fails. One backup tape gets taken a few miles away from the house to a safe place so that if a disaster befalls our home, we will be able to recover the information.

In the short run, this little routine serves its purpose. We could recover our most important data after an unhappy event relatively quickly. In the long run, however, all of this data will be lost.

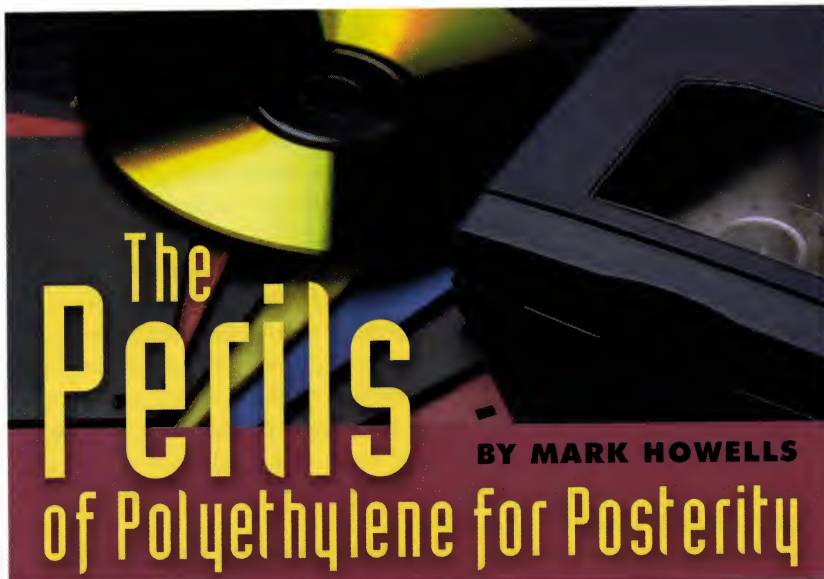
Ideally, if my great-great-grandchildren came across one of those old DAT tapes from the early twenty-first century, the tapes might still have data that is retrievable. That's assuming the tapes were kept under ideal storage conditions, periodically re-tensioned, and technical obsolescence hadn't made DAT tape readers impossible to find or the files on the tapes unreadable with future systems. (Have you tried to find a punch card reader lately?) But in the reality of my not-so-careful usage and storage of these tapes, they may not last more than ten or twenty years.

Backup tapes are not a viable long-term storage solution if I want to save my genealogical research for the distant future. Obviously, we're going to have to do something different if we want the results of our research to survive long-term.

## Useful Lives

How long a particular type of media will remain readable is an educated guessing game. Honest people will disagree as to what the results of accelerated stress testing mean to the actual useful lives of the media in question. Unfortunately, only time will generate the actual answers.

Various factors will influence the useful life of a piece of media. Its



manufactured quality, the amount of use the media gets during its lifetime, how it is handled, how it is stored, and the quality of the equipment used to write or read off of the media all affect how long it will last. Environmental variations in temperature, humidity, and exposure to light, as well as biological, chemical, or electro-mechanical contamination are going to reduce media lifetimes as well.

Media life expectancy is most directly determined by its component materials. The composition of the protective layers, encoding surfaces, substrates, dyes, inks, and storage containers all affect its useful lifetime. The nature of the data encoding—whether human or machine readable, magnetic or optical, active or passive—is usually secondary in determining media life span.

Hard drive disks have the benefit of being contained within a tightly controlled environment—the drive itself. Floppy disks may be exposed to air, dirt, and fingerprints if the slide cover is pulled back. Magnetic media dependent on polymer substrates are at the mercy of the substrate's rate of deterioration. In the old days of the 1960s, this was usually polyethylene; now it's mostly Mylar®. Static memory devices such as thumb drives have no moving parts like hard

drives or floppies so they tend to last longer but are still at risk from magnetic fields. Obviously, optical storage devices such as CD-ROMs are not susceptible to failure due to magnetic fields since magnetism is not used to encode optical discs. However, optical discs can have their protective surfaces scratched, making the underlying data unreadable.

It's interesting to note that "burning a CD-R" on your own PC utilizes a medium that has less longevity than commercially created CD-ROMs. This is because the writable CD-Rs use a form of dye to record the digital information whereas the commercial CD-ROMs use physical peaks and valleys on their substrate. The dye is less stable than the physical encoding, yet both are subject to wear and tear on their plastic coated surfaces.

## What to Do in the Short-Term

Electronic media is great because it can be read and written to so quickly. Speed of access is its strength, but durability is its weakness. Electronic formats should not be used for preservation purposes when there are other formats available. Ultimately, genealogical data destined for future preservation should be migrated off of



electronic formats and onto non-electronic formats with greater life expectancies, as shown in the chart below.

Given that most of us are not yet planning for posterity, here are some short-term suggestions for preserving electronic media.

● **When making regular periodic backups—the kind you use if your PC were to drop dead tomorrow—be sure to back up the software programs needed to read your files as well as the data files themselves.**

Keeping handy copies of software programs such as your genealogy program, e-mail program, etc., will increase the ease with which you can recover. If you use any compression utilities to fit more on your media, make copies of these as well so you may successfully uncompress your

different media formats. For instance, if you regularly back up to DAT tapes, perform the same backup using a CD-R disc. Data survivability increases with every dispersed copy of your data and with every different media format used.

● **Test your backup media every six months.** Perform an actual restore from your backup media to your PC. This will help detect if your backup media is failing earlier rather than later. Humorously enough, as I wrote this article, one of my DAT backup tapes physically failed.

## The Migration Trail

Our ancestors left migration trails that genealogists today follow in the records they left behind. Down a river, across an ocean, then overland by

the benefits of new and faster software and hardware, I was unintentionally keeping my data “fresh.” Migrating your data between media formats over time is a critical way to avoid technical obsolescence and media failure.

● **Observe the migration trail of others first.** What are your friends and relations using for electronic media? Some of the new formats may turn out to be technical or business model deadends, so pay attention to media formats that build up their consumer popularity and are accepted into the mainstream. You don’t want to wind up recording your data on the equivalent of Betamax VCR tapes that did not survive the marketplace battle with VHS. Find out what your local library or your place of work uses for electronic media.

● **Migrate to two different formats if possible.** When considering a system upgrade, take the time to consider including more than one method of electronic media storage. When you buy a new system, get a CD burner and a thumb drive so you have two formats on which to make copies of your data. This guards against single device hardware failure and can extend the useful life of your data by betting on two media horses.

● **When you migrate between formats, double-check the accuracy of the new media.** Compare the data on the new media to the data on the old media to ensure that the transfer was successful. Have another set of eyes do this for you as well so neither of you miss anything. It’s fairly typical for data to “drop” between formats due to software errors.

● **Document your data.** Record information about the data on or with the container for your new media. At the very least, record the name of the software used to create the data, software vendor, software version, date, and vendor and model number of the hardware system used to write the data. If possible, include the

Electronic Medium	Useful Lifetime in Years
Floppy Disk (3.5", Zip®, etc.)	10 – 20
Magnetic Tape (VHS, DAT, 8mm, etc.)	10 – 20
CD-ROM	5 – 50
CD-R	2 – 30
DVD	5 – 20
Hard Disk	10 – 20
Static Memory (Thumb drives, etc.)	10 – 50
Non-Electronic Medium	Useful Lifetime in Years
Microfilm	100 – 200
Paper (newsprint)	5 – 25
Paper (archival grade acid-free)	100 – 500
Photo (negatives & prints)	100 – 200
Oldest stone inscriptions	Over 4,000

data if required. Having the backup and restore software you use on a different form of media will also increase your data’s chances of being readable in the near future. For example, if you regularly back up your data files to a CD-R disc, have a Zip® disc with your backup and restore software accompany the CD-R into storage.

● **Make more than one backup.**

Make duplicate backups and store them in different locations—as far apart geographically as possible. Better yet, make duplicate backups on

wagon, etc. Your data has a migration trail as well. If you’ve been researching your family history for any length of time, your data has probably migrated a few times. I entered my earliest research on handwritten family group sheets. In time, I transcribed these to a DOS-based software program with data files stored on 5-½ inch floppy disks. Now, my software and genealogical data are on several different forms of media. That’s at least two separate migration steps between media. While I was migrating to gain



source, content, and structure of the data such as the creator's name, field names and formats, relationships to other data, etc. This information will become important in future attempts to recover the data.

## For the Future

Unless we are extremely diligent and extremely well-funded, our electronic media will ultimately fail. The long-term goal of preservation-minded genealogists should be to migrate their data away from electronic format and on to something more permanent. Laser-inscribed granite makes an excellent long-term choice. But we usually save that technology for our tombstones. Publishing your genealogical data in book format will certainly help to preserve it. Archival quality paper and microfilm are the most common solutions to the preservation problem right now. Realistically, there are limits to what individuals can do to preserve their research for posterity.

Making the preservation of your research someone else's responsibility is one way to overcome the limits of individual resources. You could find that one young cousin who shares your passion for the family's history and turn your research over to him. This will ensure its transmission across at least one generation. You are then dependent on the cousin's ability to find a successor as data custodian in the subsequent generation. "Keeping it in the family" may only be a one- or two-generation solution.

Donating the results of your research to one of the many institutions that collect this sort of data is undoubtedly the best choice. Local and national libraries, genealogical and historical societies, and international institutions such as the Family History Library are aware of the issues surrounding data preservation. Often, they are equipped with experts and the institutional wherewithal to

acquire, migrate between media, preserve, and make your research available to future generations. Be sure to investigate the institution's capabilities in these areas before making arrangements to donate your research. Ask these questions:

- How will the institution preserve your research?
- Does it require permission to duplicate your data in order to preserve it?
- What, if any, rights as the creator of your research results are you granting to the institution?
- If the institution migrates your data between media formats, will you be able to obtain your own copy of the new format? Will you or the institution keep your original?
- How will your relations and/or the general public obtain access to your data at the institution?

## Generational Laughter

My great-great-grandchildren will probably laugh at the quaintness of the DAT tapes I am currently using to record their ancestry. By then, their biological- or crystalline-based storage systems will no doubt make DAT cartridges look like toys. I enjoy a good joke as much as the next ancestor, but as a family historian, I have a responsibility to ensure that my research is saved for posterity. Electronic media is not a long-term solution to the problems of data survivability. As counter-intuitive as it appears, data preservation is dependent on relatively low-tech solutions. High-tech storage allows for fast speeds and huge capacities, but it simply can't go the distance when carrying data into the future. &

*Mark Howells watches his data deteriorate at [markhow@oz.net](mailto:markhow@oz.net).*

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# My Search for Grandfather Luis

by Nellie Pacheco

As a young old child I would gaze up at an oval black and white picture that hung on my grandmother's bedroom wall. The photo was of a World War I soldier dressed in an Army uniform. He wore leggings and black shoes that rose to his knees. The boots stood out because his left leg crossed over his right knee. A black caliber handgun lay across his lap.

The man sat tall and straight in a high-backed wooden chair. His serious brown eyes followed mine no matter where I moved. I even hid behind the sofa, but when I came up he was still looking at me. This handsome man was my grandfather, Luis Cortez.

"Tell me about my grandfather," I asked my grandmother many times.

My grandmother would reply, "He went to look for work, but no one knows where. He died in Colorado."

Over the years, I continued to ask her about my grandfather. One day my grandmother's story finally

changed. "He died in a mental institution somewhere close to Pueblo, Colorado," she said. "God punished him for leaving us. He went crazy and died."

When I was fifteen years old, I moved from Talpa, New Mexico, to Cheyenne, Wyoming. There were times when I thought of my grandfather; I talked to my mother, Asencion, about him. My mother had not seen her father since she was eight years old. She missed him very much. She told me of the many unsuccessful searches she had conducted to find her half-sister, Louisa, who lived somewhere in Colorado. My mother never located her sister. I found out through my research that Louisa had died at the age of twenty-five of a heart ailment.

In 1964, my husband, our two daughters, and I moved to Pueblo, Colorado, where my husband was to attend barber school. Perhaps it was the new move and the life change, but I suddenly felt an intense persistence to find out more about my grandfather. I wanted to fill a void in my life. I wanted to know who he was. Why was he such a mystery in our lives? What happened to him? Where did he go? Why did he leave his family?

I called the Pueblo State Hospital to inquire about Luis Cortez. Unfortunately, the attendant needed dates that I didn't have.

I put the Cortez research aside and continued researching my other family

histories for a few years. I felt like I had hit a brick wall and was not making any progress.

The summer of 1991 I attended a writing workshop at the local college and received an assignment to write a character monologue. I decided to write a letter to my grandmother from my grandfather based on a postcard I had retrieved from a family album.

The postcard I found was from my grandfather when he was stationed overseas in the Army. He addressed my grandmother as his dearest, loving wife and asked her about her health and the children's well-being. On the other side of the postcard was a black and white photo of him dressed in his Army uniform. As far as I knew this was the only correspondence my grandmother had saved from him.

My letter read: "My Dear Wife Francisquita, I miss you and my two children. Army life is lonely and I am far away from home. I left you, my family, in Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico. I don't know if I will ever see you again. After I completed my term in the army and came back I was too restless and jittery. I moved from New Mexico to Colorado. I met somebody else. You will probably hate me forever. I hope you and my children and grandchildren will forgive me someday and pray for me after I am gone from this earth."

I signed his name, Luis Cortez.

The letter I wrote for the class further inspired me to find out more about my grandfather and my ancestry. I decided to search for my grandfather's date of birth and death, but by that time my parents and grandmother



had passed away. I asked my brothers and sisters but they didn't know much more than I did.

One morning when I was looking at some family pictures, I found part of a small white envelope that had scribbling in my mother's handwriting. It contained my grandfather's name and the date of his death: 7 August 1936.

I telephoned my brother Victor in New Mexico and told him of my findings. He drove out to Our Lady of Guadalupe church in Taos, New Mexico, where many baptism and marriage documents are stored. My brother obtained a copy of my grandfather's birth certificate and sent it to me immediately. After I received it, I wrote to the Department of

Ordway, Colorado, a small community between Rocky Ford and Pueblo. My husband and I planned a trip to the area to search for his grave.

During Labor Day weekend 1992, my husband, our daughter Catherine, and I drove to Ordway. We arrived in the evening and asked a resident for directions to the cemetery.

It was located only one mile away on a hill overlooking the green cantaloupe fields, two miles east of Rocky Ford. The black wrought-iron sign swinging with the breeze read "Valley View Cemetery." My stomach was knotted. We saw rows and rows of graves and were uncertain where to begin. We scanned a few monuments and I recalled that the United States

Veterans Hospital in Fort Lyons. The reply I received stated: "All records were either purged or transferred to St. Louis, Missouri, where all the National Military Archive records are stored. You will need to fill out an SF 180 form required by the government and the archives."

I obtained the forms and filled in my grandfather's name, date of birth, his parents' names, his date of death, and the information from the gravestone and mailed it to St. Louis.

*I felt an intense persistence to find out more about my grandfather. I wanted to fill a void in my life. I wanted to know who he was. What happened to him? Why did he leave his family?*

Health and Vital Statistics in Denver, Colorado. Within six weeks, I received a copy of my grandfather's death certificate in the mail. It listed his name as Louis Cortez, not Luis. His birth date was one year and one day different from the birth certificate we had received from the church in Taos. Cause of death was listed as a heart attack at the Veterans Hospital in Fort Lyons, Colorado. He died at the age of forty-seven. He listed "Anna" as his wife and next of kin. When I read his other wife's name, I cried.

I drove to the State Archives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and scrolled through rolls of handwritten and faded records on microfiche until my vision blurred. Finally I located the marriage date for Frances Gurule, my grandmother, and Luis Cortez: 27 April 1908.

Later, I studied my grandfather's death certificate for additional details; it revealed that he was buried in

Army provides white monuments for its soldiers so we searched the monuments and read the inscriptions. We all spread out in different sections of the cemetery. Within a few minutes, my husband yelled to me and motioned me over. When I got to him, he pointed to a white marble stone with an inscription that read:

**PVT. Louis Cortez,  
1 cl 115, Engineers 40 Division  
New Mexico,  
August 7, 1936**

The following day we contacted St. Peter's Catholic Rectory in Rocky Ford, where the church records were kept, but no one on the staff was available. I wrote a letter of inquiry and left it for the priest. A week later he answered that he had no records by the name of Louis Cortez.

Using the information I had copied from the monument, I wrote to the



My grandmother, Francisquita Cortez, with her children Maria Asencion and Daniel.

While awaiting correspondence with the Military Personnel Records office in St. Louis, I also did research at the Laramie County Genealogy Library in Cheyenne. I came upon an address in Washington, D.C., to send inquiries regarding World War I veterans. Following my inquiry I received additional information about my grandfather's infantry and division.

For the sixth time, I called the Veterans Hospital in Fort Lyons. I was still hoping for one more clue. While the receptionist patiently scrolled through the data on her computer, I asked her, "Could the Veterans



Regional Office in Denver still have some of his records?"

She responded, "They might," and then provided me with an address for the Regional Office in Denver, Colorado.

I wrote another inquiry and within a week I received a package from the Regional Office in Denver. It contained my grandfather's entire document file—medical and dental record, military entry, and discharge date. The file filled in much of the details I had been seeking.

I learned that he had enlisted in the army at Pueblo, Colorado, on 27 August 1917, at age twenty-nine. He was listed as a laborer, a Catholic, and a married man. His health was excellent. He listed his emergency contact as his daughter, Sensonita Cortez, of Taos, New Mexico. Sensonita is my mother, Asencion.

The examining doctor at the Veterans Hospital reported that he had two gold crowns on his top and bottom teeth on

the right side. He was sixty-four inches tall and weighed 140 pounds.

Grandfather served in the Army from 27 August 1917 until 9 July 1919, and was overseas during war time. He was honorably discharged at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, after his unit demobilized.

In August 1919, one month after his discharge, my grandfather left New Mexico for Del Norte, Colorado, to secure work. He met twenty-four-year-old Anna Gallegos, and they moved from Del Norte to Pueblo, Colorado, then to Swink, Colorado, where he worked at the Nakamot Ranch. On 19 November 1921 a daughter, Louisa, was born to the couple at the ranch in Swink.

They lived in Swink for five years. In 1924 they moved to Denver, Colorado, and lived on Market Street. In 1927 they moved to Ordway, Colorado, where Grandfather worked at the Kuriyama's Ranch Ordway and Manzanola. Their address was listed

as Motor Route A, Crowley.

His last employer was with the W.P.A., and he listed his father, Ramon Cortez, as his boss.

The family resided in Crowley until my grandfather entered the Veterans Hospital in Fort Lyons on 26 May 1936. He was hospitalized for seventy-one days with general paralysis, cerebral-type. On 6 June 1936, Dr. F.A. Passarella M.D. performed an operation for spinal puncture under local anesthesia. Anna signed the permission waiver.

He died from cardiac arrest on 7 August 1936 at 5:07 A.M. Anna was still alive in November 1954, according to an affidavit to a representative in the Veterans Administration Regional Office in Denver, Colorado.

While her husband was in the hospital, Anna had corresponded weekly with Mr. C.R. Miller, the director at the Veterans Hospital in Fort Lyons, Colorado. In her letters she asked about her husband's condition.

In completing the search for my grandfather, I came to know him as a real person. Sadly, he never made contact with the family he left behind. His only son, Daniel, also joined the Army in 1943 and was killed in action during World War II. His daughter, my mother, died before I could share this information with her. My grandmother Francisquita lived to the age of ninety-four. She knew her husband had lived with someone else during the greater part of his life.

In my long search, I found answers to some of the questions I had asked so many times as a child. It gave me a sense of history. I can now answer my own children's questions when they ask me about their great-grandfather. ♪

*Nellie E. Pacheco is the family genealogist and an author of family stories and poetry. She lives in Cheyenne, Wyoming, with her husband Tomas and their family.*

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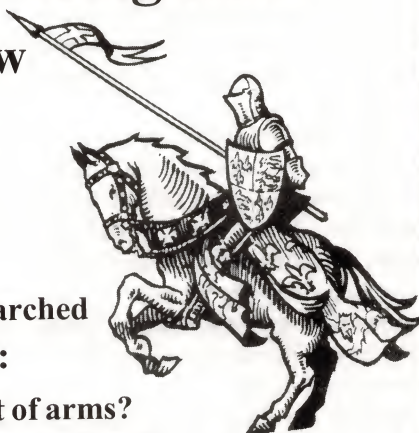
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# The Original Recipe

by Sandy Aguirre Montanino

Pasta sauce is nearly sacred in my family. The thought of life without it would be unbearable. While other families might have inherited municipal bonds, money, or real estate, our inheritance was the original recipe for pasta sauce. This is, of course, a great source of pride to us all.

My father was a big man and the small kitchen was his domain. He entered it with the confidence and determination of a heavyweight contender. Reaching for the big pot and placing it strategically on his favorite burner was the first step. He would then clear his throat several times and without further delay, in his deep baritone voice, he would start singing Italian songs. This was our signal that he had formally entered the culinary arena and was not to be disturbed. He would pour virgin olive oil in the bottom of the pot, adding freshly crushed garlic, fresh bay leaves, and mushrooms for starters. My father had no patience with amateurs. Anyone who did not make it his way was not just misinformed, but barbaric.

My Aunt Jennie had other ideas. She believed no pasta sauce was complete without a little parsley and onions thrown in for good measure. Aunt Edie on the other hand, just loved a good secret. She waited for the right moment to tell me, then looked over her shoulder, lowered her voice and raised her eyebrows as she whispered, "A teaspoon of sugar will take away bitterness from any tomato." I've always been good at recognizing classified data whenever I hear it, so I signaled her back by raising my eyebrows, too.

One of my cousins must have survived some unrecorded pasta sauce

famine in his youth. His terror at the possibility of reliving the experience has delighted the neighbors. He is so afraid of not having enough to eat that he drags out a huge pot and fills it to the brim. This abundance has provided countless feasts of rigatoni, ground pork, and fennels swimming in savory pasta sauce. What we cannot eat we give to the neighbors. And everybody knows pasta sauce always tastes even better the next day.

The spoon for stirring pasta sauce must have been selected from a number of entries by some official spoon committee. I am amazed that no matter which member of the family is cooking the pasta or where in the country they live, the wooden spoon with its long handle is the only spoon used to stir the pot.

Stirring the sauce is an actual art form not well-known by the outside world. We are taught to stir the sauce clockwise, never counter-clockwise. Each apprentice has unsuccessfully attempted to challenge this ritual, but who can question generations of pasta sauce makers? The fear of stirring counter-clockwise agonizes us all. What could conceivably happen anyway? After all, is it possible to unravel pasta sauce?

Everyone in the family knows pasta sauce is a serious business. Even while empty, the large pasta pot is looked upon with great esteem as a kind of symbol of pride and heritage. The more worn the pot appears, the more dignity it brings its owner, like a well-used gun in the Old West.

While pasta can be eaten any day of the week, like all nearly sacred things, Sunday was the big day. The children



even called it Pasta Sunday. There was the big pot filled to the brim, and Italian hard bread rolls on the table surrounded by family and friends to visit and to share the meal. Grandpa would sit at the head of the table, raise his glass up high, and wish us all good health.

"Salute!" he would say.

We would do the same, raising our glasses toward him and echo, "Salute."

Pasta sauce can always be found at our family gatherings. And regardless of the right way to cook it, when the aroma of that wonderful sauce permeates the air, you can close your eyes and transcend through time to memories of a lifetime of Sundays, with lively conversations, lots of laughter, and deepening bonds.

I have long wondered about the source of the original recipe. How far back do we have to go to find this ancestor who provided us with such a long-standing culinary wonder? And will she ever know what an extraordinary treasure she left behind and how sacred pasta sauce has become to our family? ♪

*Sandy Aguirre Montanino has been a realtor for the last twenty-five years and has won many national awards in her field. Through her ancestral research, she has grown to love writing her memoirs.*

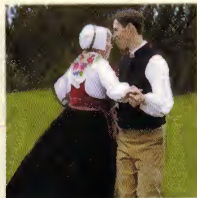
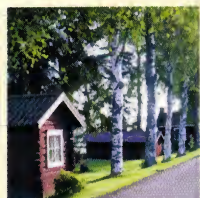


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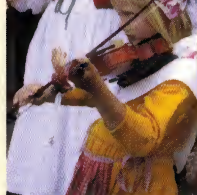
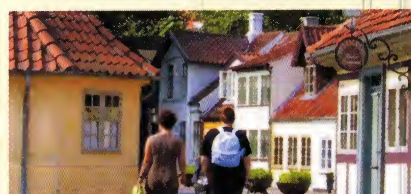
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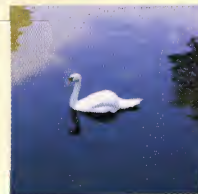


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